

4454.C5

*The unpurchased Love of God in the Redemption
of the World by Jesus Christ; a great Argu-
ment for Christian Benevolence,*

ILLUSTRATED IN
THREE DISCOURSES;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
REMARKS ON THE DISCOURSES OF THE LATE
CALEB EVANS, D. D.

ENTITLED
"CHRIST CRUCIFIED;"
AND
A LETTER TO THE REV. DAVID BOGUE, OF
GOSPORT, ON HIS SERMON,

ENTITLED
"THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF HAVING RIGHT SENTI-
MENTS IN RELIGION."

By D. B. JARDINE,
MINISTER AT THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BATH. K

Ὁς ἔδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, ἵνα λύσῃσθαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνο-
μίας, καὶ καθάρσῃ ἑαυτὸν ἑαυτῷ λαὸν περισσίων, ζηλώτην καλῶν ἔργων.

PAUL.

BATH: PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL:

FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON;
BULL AND HENSLEY, AND EVANS, BATH; LLOYD, BRISTOL;
AND WATTS, GOSPORT.

1792.

THE HISTORY OF THE
OF THE
OF THE

THREE DISCOURSES

REMARKS ON THE DISCOURSES
GIVEN BY THE

CHRIST CHURCH

A LETTER TO THE REV. BISHOP
OF THE



IN THE
OF THE

OF THE
OF THE

OF THE
OF THE

TO THE
SOCIETY OF CHRISTIANS
WHO ASSEMBLE AT THE
UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BATH.

THE following plain discourses, which were at first composed for your instruction, permit me now to dedicate to you as a small token of my affection and gratitude.

It is a practice too common in the world, and especially in the scenes with which you are conversant, to inveigh against speculation on theological subjects. By what motives the authors of these invectives are actuated I shall not presume to decide. Whether they shun the light, lest the falsehood of their long-received opinions should be made manifest;—whether having been in the habit of devoting their time wholly to the engagements of pleasure or business, they

are indisposed for employments of a different nature, and which require considerable attention and labour;—whether they apprehend their temporal interest to be connected with a public profession of generally received opinions;—whether they are unwilling, by a regard to religion, to subject themselves to the sneers of the giddy crowd, and the ridicule of the scoffing unbeliever;—whether they are afraid of the calumny and reproach, to which an open avowal of their principles would expose them, from the *prejudiced*, who by the wrath of man seek to serve the cause of GOD, or from the *interested*, who tremble for the craft by which they get their wealth;—or whether they are under the influence of causes, not indeed equally criminal, but equally unfavourable to the interests of truth, such as an unhappy scepticism of mind, a native indolence of character, or an apprehension of disadvantage to religion from theological investigations; we must leave their motives to be scrutinized by the great Searcher of Hearts, to whom every hidden spring of action is perfectly known.

By

By whatever considerations others may be restrained from endeavouring to root out those noxious weeds, which have for many centuries flourished in the vineyard of GOD, and may be induced to pass severe censures upon those who cannot like themselves remain inactive; permit me, my friends, to declare, that I cannot discharge my conscience towards GOD, without making some humble efforts to vindicate the honour of his Gospel, which has been most grossly misrepresented; that I know of no method in which I can better display my benevolence to mankind, than in employing the feeble powers, which the Creator has given me, to recommend the Christian religion as rational, inviting, and worthy of all acceptation; and that I cannot be faithful to the important trust you have reposed in my hands, without attempting to give you such representations of Divine Truth, as are most likely to cherish in your minds the temper and dispositions of Christians, and best calculated to produce cheerful, regular, and acceptable obedience. Ever would I attend to the advice of Paul, “avoid profane

“and vain babblings, and oppositions of science
“falsly so called.” Yet I would be ambitious
to imitate the example of this great preacher of
righteousness, who could thus appeal to the
church at Ephesus, “I have kept back nothing
“that was profitable unto you; and I have not
“shunned to declare unto you the whole coun-
“sel of GOD.”

Speculation, unless it be connected with
virtue, is idle and useless; serving only to ex-
cite the wonder of the vulgar, to please the
fancy of the hearer, or to gratify the vanity of
the speaker. But one principal excellence of
the Christian system consists in this circumstance,
that all its truths are *practical* truths. He
therefore, who, by speculating upon them, sepa-
rates them from all corrupt mixtures, and causes
them to appear in a clearer light, strengthens
the motives to a life of holiness. It was with
this view I called your attention to the follow-
ing discourses; and the same consideration has
induced me to comply with the request of those
friends who desired their publication.

If

If we are brought to believe that some external inducement led the Almighty to be gracious to his creatures, then it is palpably evident that our reasons for loving the Almighty in return, and for imitating his example in our behaviour to mankind, would be weakened, if not wholly overthrown. For the purpose of guarding against this unhappy conclusion, and of exhibiting in its full force the evangelical motive to love God and our brethren, I have attempted to prove that our Heavenly Father was influenced by no other motive in our redemption, than his own benevolence and compassion.

Silence with respect to errors so highly disgraceful to our religion, and pernicious to the best interests of man, as many of those are which have reigned long triumphant in the world, would be an imposition to which I could not submit. Upon no other terms than the enjoyment of the fullest freedom to oppose these corruptions of Christianity, could I consent to devote my life to the exercise of the Christian ministry; nor indeed would it be excusable,
upon

upon maxims of worldly prudence, to remain a teacher of religion among Protestant dissenters; from whom it is least of all to be expected that any tolerable compensation could be granted for the loss of this liberty. Among you I have enjoyed uninterruptedly that latitude of speculation and expression which I desired; and your sentiments on this head were most warmly and liberally expressed, when on a late occasion an advantageous proposal, which presented the pleasing prospect of more extensive usefulness, induced me to entertain some thoughts of removing from you. You then said, "If we are led to speak with earnestness, it is in behalf of the glorious cause of which you are an advocate." You also declared, "Your labours will certainly be of more essential service to the cause we wish to promote, being much more wanted here, than in a society already blest with one of the ablest investigators of divine truth." I mention this to your honour, and to shew to the friends of truth, that, even in this dissipated scene, there is a society of Christians, whom fashion has not been able to corrupt, or folly to pervert,

pervert, from zealous attempts for the reformation of the abuses, which have taken place in our holy religion.

Should I continue to enjoy your unanimous approbation, and have reason to hope that my labours are in any degree effectual, in engaging you to investigate the Scriptures, and to improve your hearts, I should consider my situation as far more happy, and indeed as far more honourable, than that of the most dignified ecclesiastic, whose emoluments are often purchased at the dear price of integrity, and are always attended with an humiliating degree of mental slavery.

Earnestly wishing you the enjoyment of every blessing, and ardently solicitous to be the means of promoting your best interests,

I am, my Christian friends,

sincerely and affectionately yours,

D. B. JARDINE.

...the ...
...the ...
...the ...

...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...
...the ...

5 JY61

...the ...
...the ...

...the ...

P R E F A C E.

THE Author of the ensuing publication differs in opinion very widely from those persons, who maintain that a writer should not bring his compositions before the world, unless they consist principally of ideas to which public attention never has been previously invited, or unless there be something peculiarly excellent in the stile or manner of his writings. He apprehends there are certain local circumstances, of which a writer, even of moderate talents, may avail himself advantageously, as the means of producing in his own neighbourhood that discussion of important subjects, which the far more perfect and valuable writings of persons at a distance might not have been able to effect. He also believes, that if this notion were more prevalent, and the friends of truth made the places of their particular residence the theatres of theological investigation, the blind reverence which is paid to the many absurdities which have disgraced

disgraced the Christian name, would be much sooner destroyed. With this view he has published the following discourses, the remarks upon the sermons of the late Dr. Evans, and the letter to the Rev. Mr. Bogue. The discourses were originally composed without the most distant view to their publication; and they are now presented to the reader with very trifling alterations since their delivery.

Some apology perhaps may be expected for replying to the sentiments of a deceased writer. The author can only say, that he intended to make some remarks upon Dr. Evans's publication soon after its appearance, when that severe disorder took place, which disabled the Doctor from engaging in controversy, and which at length deprived the world of a very valuable, a very useful, and in many respects a very liberal man. But though he has retired from this scene of action, his writings still remain to exercise the attention of the publick; and they are still read by many, as containing an unanswerable vindication of what they apprehend to be the
true

true doctrine of *Christ crucified*: they ought therefore to be open to the free animadversion of those who view the doctrine itself as erroneous and dangerous, and who consider the arguments by which it is supported as feeble and unsatisfactory. Dr. Evans's sermons also have some friends who, it is said, are prepared to reply to any strictures which may be made upon them.

The want of arrangement in the sermons on which the author animadverts, he hopes will be considered as his excuse for having been in any degree led into the same defect. Out of respect for the memory of the dead, he has declined noticing many observations and scriptural quotations, which would have been attended to had Dr. Evans been spared by Providence, but which it is probable he himself, upon reflexion, would not have undertaken to vindicate. In other instances, the doctrines to be opposed are so very unintelligible, that the author is inclined to exclaim with Erasmus, *In quibus omnibus tantum est eruditionis, tantum difficultatis, ut existimem, ipsis apostolis alio spiritu opus fore, si cogantur*

*cogantur hisce de rebus cum hoc novo Theologorum
genere conferere manus.*

For the letter to Mr. Bogue no apology is necessary. If it be written with any degree of warmth, this is what the sermon demanded. Mr. Bogue's discourse, notwithstanding his professions of candour, can be considered as nothing better than a piece of unprovoked, unjustifiable, and illiberal abuse. It contains a greater number of gross misrepresentations, and of foul calumnies, than can be found in any other equal quantity of letter-press. It exhibits also such wonderful specimens of logical skill, of precision in scriptural criticism, of profound acquaintance with Christian antiquity, and of an accurate knowledge of the persons and principles he presumes to oppose, as probably might have excited the admiration of the assembly of learned divines in whose presence the harangue was delivered, and who were pleased to request its publication; but which must produce very different sensations in the mind of every man of understanding and liberality. Every friend of
truth

truth and moderation must be equally surpris'd and grieved, to find that the spirit of party should lead any body of *Dissenting* Ministers to be guilty of circulating such uncandid reflexions upon their fellow Christians. Such conduct might be expected more naturally from the members of an hierarchy, in which preferment frequently depends upon the support of error; but in dissenters, whose temporal interests are not so much affected by truth, such behaviour could scarcely be expected.

The following pages are submitted to the attention and candour of the publick, for the purpose of promoting the cause of truth and virtue: if this end should in the least be answered by them, the author will have attained the only object of this publication.



DISCOURSES,

with the exception of the one which is
the only one which is not a copy of
the original. The original is in the
possession of the Library of Congress
and is the only one which is not a
copy of the original. The original is
in the possession of the Library of
Congress and is the only one which
is not a copy of the original.

The following pages are devoted to the
study of the original and are not
copies of the original.

5 JY61

Discouraged



C O N T E N T S.

D I S C O U R S E I.

	Page
T HE Christian Doctrine of Propitiation —	17

D I S C O U R S E II.

The Divine Goodness displayed in the Mission of Christ	43
--	----

D I S C O U R S E III.

Christian Benevolence urged from the Love of God to Men — — —	57
---	----

A P P E N D I X, P A R T I.

Remarks upon four Discourses on Christ crucified by the late CALEB EVANS, D. D.

Introduction — — —	75
Chap. I. On the Doctrine which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness —	9
Chap. II. On Dr. Evans's mode of interpreting Scripture, and on some texts which he has urged to support the Doctrine of the Atonement —	89
Chap. III. On the argument in favour of the Atonement derived from the history of Christ's sufferings	115
Chap. IV. On the argument in favour of the Atonement from the sacrifices practised by Heathens and Jews — — —	122

C O N T E N T S.

Chap. V. On the argument in defence of the Atonement from the dignity of Christ's person	— 128
Sect. I. On the Pre-existence of Christ	— 130
Sect. II. On the Deity of Christ	— 150
Chap. VI. On the consequences of the Doctrine of the Atonement	— 166

APPENDIX, PART II.

A letter to the Rev. David Bogue	— 177
----------------------------------	-------

E R R A T A.

- Page 39. l. 6. for till read *tell*.
 41. l. 14. r. *to* be set.
 63. l. 15. for destruction r. *distinction*.
 82. l. 21. r. *foolishness*.
 88. l. 15. r. *the* resurrection.
 92. l. 4. r. *the* scriptures.
 96. l. ult. for hand r. *had*.
 121. l. 1. r. *agree*.

5 JY 61

DISCOURSES,

DISCOURSES, &c.

I JOHN IV. 10, 11.

HEREIN IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT HE LOVED US, AND SENT HIS SON TO BE A PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS. BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE OUGHT ALSO TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

HOW peculiarly excellent is the Christian system! It employs methods the most efficacious to recommend the virtues it enjoins. It is not only a system of salutary directions to regulate our conduct, but also of persuasive motives, by which we are powerfully urged to the performance of what God requires of us. For example: *beneficence to the poor* is recommended to us by the example of Jesus, who, though invested by his Father with miraculous powers, sought not to employ them for his own personal advantage, but voluntarily submitted to a life of poverty, as the most effectual means to complete our redemption. We are urged to *the forgiveness of our enemies*, from the consideration, that the Supreme Being forgives those who are enemies to him by wicked works. We are

B

persuaded

persuaded to *universally extended benevolence*, by the infinitely diffusive favours of the providence of God, who is good to the evil and the unthankful. And in our text we are called upon to practise the great duty of *Christian love*, from the love of God displayed in sending his Son to die for our sins.

In the chapter whence my text is taken, the benevolent Apostle John affectionately warns the Christians, to whom he writes, against certain erroneous opinions. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." These *false prophets* we learn, from ecclesiastical history, to have been the followers of one Cerinthus; and are by antient writers denominated *Gnostics*. Against these persons the Apostle seems to have directed many parts of his gospel, as well as his epistolary writings.

It was the general opinion of philosophers* at the time of the introduction of Christianity, and was held by the followers of Cerinthus, that all human souls were originally parts of God; that they were emanations from his substance, and existed as intelligent beings

* Vid. Enfield's History of Philosophy, vol. ii. p. 153, 154. Priestley's History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, vol. i. p. 118, 175.

beings in some former state, previous to their residence in human bodies. Entertaining the most degrading ideas of all material substances, they always spoke very contemptuously of these bodies, and did not consider them to be disgraced by the most criminal sensualities.

When these philosophers became converts to the Christian religion, they did not oblige their philosophy to give way to Christianity, but caused the doctrine of Christ to submit to their philosophy. Ashamed of being denominated the disciples of a crucified Nazarene, they were careful to attribute to the soul of Jesus a very elevated rank among the different orders of pre-existent spirits. This false philosophy, and false shame, led them farther. They zealously contended that *the Christ*, whom they spoke of as a great pre-existent spirit, would have been degraded by being shut up in a human body, and thus surrounded with the gross impurities of matter; they therefore maintained that he *appeared* only to have a body; that the object of our senses, which was called *Jesus*, was a mere phantom, incapable of the affections and passions of man, and consequently that he suffered nothing during his life, or at his crucifixion.

This evidently is the opinion to which the Apostle here refers. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God.

“ Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is the Christ
 “ come in the flesh, is of God. And every one that
 “ confesseth not that Jesus is the Christ come in the
 “ flesh, is not of God.” That is, every one who be-
 lieveth that Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, is the
 Christ, or the Messiah long promised to the world, be-
 lieveth the true gospel doctrine. But every one who
 believeth not that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah,
 but that the Messiah is one of those pre-existing ema-
 nations from Deity, which the false philosophy of the
 age teaches, maintains a doctrine contrary to that of
 the gospel. This latter doctrine the Apostle emphati-
 cally pronounces to be antichristian, and the founda-
 tion of the *grand apostacy*, which was to take place in
 the world, from the purity of the Christian Faith.
 “ This, saith he, is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof
 “ you have heard that it should come, and even now is
 “ it already in the world.”

That in these circumstances the unpervverted Chris-
 tians should unite in a firm profession of the true gospel
 doctrine, that *Jesus* the Son of Mary was *the Christ*,
 was an object of great importance; for the attainment
 of which the Apostle most earnestly exhorts them in
 this epistle to mutual affection. As a powerful argu-
 ment to this purpose, he urges in our text the conside-
 ration of the unparalleled love of God in our redemption.

“ Herein

“ Herein is love, that though we loved not God, he
 “ loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation concern-
 “ ing our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we
 “ ought also to love one another.”

This passage of scripture teaches us the three following very important truths:

I. *That God sent his Son to be a propitiation concerning our sins.*

II. *That the mission of Christ is a remarkable display of divine goodness.*

III. *That this instance of the love of God should induce us to love one another.*

In the *first place*, I shall make a few remarks on the important truth, that God sent his Son to be a propitiation concerning our sins.

The word *propitiation* you will find to occur three times in the common English version of the New Testament. Once in the 3d chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, and twice in this first epistle of John. In the first instance, the same original word is not employed as in the other two; and it should not have

been rendered propitiation, but *propitiatory*, or *mercy-seat*.* In the two last instances the word is properly rendered. The question to be resolved now is, what
is

* In the two instances where the word *propitiation* occurs in our version of John's first epistle, the original is *ιλασμος*. In Romans iii. 25, it is *ιλαστηριον* which universally means *mercy-seat*. Mr. Wakefield renders the whole passage from v. 21 to 25, in the following manner: "But now independent of a law, a justification from God, testified by the Law and the Prophets, even a justification from God through faith in Jesus Christ, is manifest unto all who believe, (for there is no difference, because all have sinned, and are fallen short of the glory of God) who are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a mercy-seat [through faith] by his blood, for the remission of past sins." Mr. Locke's note on this passage is worthy of attention. "The Alexandrine copy omits the words *δια πίστεως*, by faith; which seems conformable to the sense of the Apostle here. He says, that *God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiatory in his blood*. The atonement under the law was made by blood sprinkled on the propitiatory or mercy seat, Lev. xvii. 14. Christ, says St. Paul, is now set out and shewn by God to be the real propitiatory or mercy seat in his own blood." Dr. Taylor's note upon this passage is so excellent, and proves in so satisfactory a manner the intention of the Apostle to compare Jesus Christ to the *mercy-seat*, that I will take the liberty to recommend it to the careful perusal of the inquisitive reader. How Dr. Doddridge, after having
read

is its meaning? What are we to understand by the expression that Christ is a *propitiation* for, or, rather, concerning our sins?

The commonly received interpretation is, "that God the Father was incensed with mankind on account of their sins, and that the Son, by what he did and

read the remarks of Mr. Locke and Taylor, should render *ἱλασμενιον* *propitiation*, is truly unaccountable. What he says in his paraphrase proves that he knew how the word ought to have been translated. But perhaps that fear of giving offence by which the Doctor was too much actuated, in this and in other cases, led him to sacrifice truth and simplicity to the good opinion of his Calvinistic brethren.

That the word *ἱλασμενιον* should be translated twice in the same sermon *propitiation*, by Dr. Williams of Birmingham, is not in the least wonderful, when we consider that the same writer is capable of adducing Rom. v. 11. "by whom we have received the *atonement*, (*καταλλαγήν*)" as a proof of the doctrine of the satisfaction; of urging the phrase *βεβαρυτι* Heb. 2. 9, as an expression appropriate to Christ, when just before it is used respecting mankind at large; and of translating the preposition *υπερ*, signifying *in the room of*, with as little scruple as though this were the sense in which it was generally used. See Dr. Williams's sermon on glorying in the Cross of Christ.

“and suffered, pacified him:”* or in other words, which sound not quite so harshly in the ears of those who have been in the habit of viewing the Deity in a more amiable light than this system represents him, it is said, “that the Divine Being could not, consistently with his justice, pardon the sins of mankind, without some adequate compensation for the breaches of his law; that Christ submitted to that suffering which was due to sinners, and which they would have been condemned to endure through eternity; and that thus the debt demanded by divine justice is discharged, and the Father becomes propitious to those for whom this satisfaction is made.”

This is the doctrine of the *atonement* or *satisfaction* of Christ, which has been for many ages maintained in the Christian church, and in the defence of which much learning

* That this is or ought to be the sentiment of every Clergyman in the Church of England, is evident from a passage in the Twelfth Homily. “For the transgression of God’s precept in eating of one apple, he condemned all the world to perpetual death, and would not be pacified but only with the blood of his own son.” The same idea is conveyed in the second article: “Christ, very God, and very man, truly suffered, was dead and buried, to *reconcile his Father to us*, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.”

learning and ingenuity have been zealously employed. If the notion be *true*, it must be of the utmost importance that it should be believed. What possibly can be of greater consequence than to be undeceived, if genuine repentance, followed by a life of piety and virtue, will not be sufficient to recommend us to the Almighty? How awful must be the delusion of the pious moralist, who seeks the favour of God, by imitating the divine character, who, as he grows in resemblance to his Maker, delights himself with the approving whispers of conscience, and indulges in hopes full of immortality, if at last his best actions be found to be only *splendid crimes*, and he be under the wrath of heaven, and exposed to eternal misery!

If the doctrine of the atonement be *false*, it is of the highest importance that its falsehood should be manifested. For whatever doctrine teaches us to depend upon any thing as the means of our acceptance with heaven, besides *doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God*, must necessarily have a pernicious influence upon the interests of piety and virtue, by representing the great duties of religion of *secondary* importance only to mankind. Nor is it an idle speculation to seek after a full conviction, whether we are indebted for our salvation to the original mercy of God, or whether our obligations are principally owed to some other being, who
benevolently

benevolently procured for us the friendship of our Maker. The good man, who wishes to render to the Almighty the honour which is his due, and who is anxious to discharge his debt of gratitude to every other being, will be solicitous to gain satisfaction on this subject. He will consider this doctrine either as a very momentous truth, or a very dangerous error.

Numerous indeed are the objections which must crowd upon the rational mind, when he contemplates the notion of a satisfaction required by God, or by his Justice, previous to his grant of mercy to the penitent.

This unwelcome doctrine is immediately opposed by those traces which we discover by the light of nature, and the instructions of Revelation, of God's disposition to forgive.

The Author of Nature hath wisely and benevolently provided remedies for the evils to which we are subject, even for those evils we bring upon ourselves by our vices.

By attending also to appearances in the moral world, we learn that the great end of the Almighty in bringing us into being, was to make us partakers of happiness. It would be easy to demonstrate, that the grand
instrument

instrument of happiness is virtue. When we are vicious, we are, as it were, counteracting the designs of Deity, by attempting to introduce disorder, and consequently unhappiness, into his government. When we are virtuous, we act agreeably to the divine intentions; we make our object the same with that of Deity. We may conclude, therefore, that when we are virtuous we are contemplated by him with complacency; and that when we are vicious he views us with displeasure. Every tendency towards vice he must behold with disapprobation, and every motion of the heart towards virtue with delight. Consequently, repentance (that is, a hatred of sin, a regard to goodness, and a sincere determination to practise it) must be sufficient to recommend us to our Maker. The original ground of his anger being removed, by the alteration that has taken place in the affections and conduct of the offender, the penitent becomes a proper object of the divine favour; every reason for just displeasure ceases; and an indisposition to forgive would be an unreasonable and unjustifiable resentment, of which the infinitely perfect mind is incapable.

Farther; If God created mankind for *happiness*, we must believe that he is disposed to prevent no part of that happiness which a man is qualified to receive. Now the penitent, of whose sincerity the Searcher of
Hearts

Hearts must be esteemed a competent judge, is as much qualified for the favour of God as though he had never offended. The Deity therefore could not abstain from pardoning him, without being considered as preventing him from an enjoyment he was well fitted to receive.

That God is inclined to pardon the penitent, is a truth clearly inscribed upon the heart of man. We discover there a disposition to forgive injuries. Good men rejoice in every opportunity of shewing compassion and mercy to those whose present state of mind evidently entitles them to it, without any reference to their past conduct. We universally consider mercy as an excellence in the human heart, and our esteem of a character is proportionate to the degree in which it prevails; on the other hand, to be unrelenting and inexorable, is to possess those qualities which will expose us to general odium. The disposition in mankind to forgive, like every other moral excellence, we should attribute in its perfection to God; for whatever amiable tendencies we discover in his reasonable offspring, we must consider as some imperfect lines of resemblance to our Father who is in heaven. The man who would not forgive an insult from a neighbour, who discovers the most unfeigned sorrow for his offence, and attempts to make some amends by the most assiduous attentions; the parent who would not pardon the

the

the follies and indiscretions of a son, and even meet him on his return to wisdom and virtue; would be objects of universal hatred. Would you not join with the world in pouring forth the severest censures upon beings thus devoid of those qualities which adorn and ennoble humanity? And shall we describe the Source of Perfection as possessing those properties which we consider even in our own imperfect species as the most unamiable and disgusting? Surely it would not be too harsh to say, that such representations are blasphemies against the Majesty of Heaven. Yet such are the representations of the Deity given us by those, who maintain that he would not pardon his frail, mistaken, guilty offspring, without some full compensation, independent on their sincere penitence, and thorough reformation.*

The

* Vain is the objection, that God is ready to forgive, but that his justice forbids it. To assert this, is to assert that his native benevolence prompts him to what his justice prohibits; and consequently, the inclinations of the divine mind being thus at variance, he would be under the influence of a necessity which would render him perpetually unhappy, unless some method could be found to satisfy his justice. But this is inconsistent with the perfect happiness of Deity, and supposes that the design of the interposition of Christ, was to deliver the

The doctrine of the divine mercy is recorded in more radiant characters in the volume of revelation. —The Almighty himself, in proclaiming his name to Moses, declares, “Jehovah, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin.” The prophet Isaiah also thus teaches the Jews: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, for he will receive him with compassion; and to his God, for he aboundeth in forgiveness.” In the Christian scriptures this pleasing attribute of Deity appears in a still clearer light. It is there held forth to us as a rule of human

the Deity from misery as well as mankind from sin. Hence it would appear that one motive in God to the mission of Christ was self-interest.

But the objection seems to be founded upon improper notions of the divine justice. The justice of God perhaps would be most properly defined, “that attribute which leads him to treat his creatures agreeably to their moral condition.” If this definition be accurate, the justice and the mercy of God may perfectly harmonize in the acceptance of the sinner, when penitence and reformation qualify him for the divine favour.

human conduct to be "merciful as God is merciful." And we are urged to the great duty of forgiving our enemies, by the consideration that God hath forgiven us though sinners. The parable of the Prodigal Son is also a most beautiful illustration of this doctrine. The unhappy youth, when he had reduced himself to the most abject misery by riotous living, and determined to betake himself to his father's house, sought not to purchase the pardon, or take with him any intercessor to influence the mind of his father. He determined to rely upon the compassion of his father, who, when he saw him afar off, ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him; interrupted his penitential language, took him to his house, attired, and entertained him as a son, who had been restored to wisdom and virtue.

The notion of an atonement, or any valuable consideration being given to the Almighty to liquidate the infinite debt, said to be due from offending creatures, is not only repugnant to what is taught us by nature and revelation concerning the divine mercy, but also opposes the great truth that *God is the sole author and proprietor of the universe.*

Who is the great Being to whom this valuable consideration is offered? Is it not to the First Cause of all things; to him who brought the universe out of nothing
into

into existence; who is the proprietor and Lord of all; who reigns sole monarch over the whole dominion of nature? "The heavens, saith the Psalmist, are thine; the earth also is thine; the world, and the fullness thereof." What therefore does any being possess, but what he has received from the hands of God? What can be rendered to him, but what is already his own? What offering can be made to the proprietor of the universe, to which he had not previously an equal right? The ingenuity of man, much as it has been misemployed in attempting to support this doctrine, so disgraceful to our holy and benevolent religion, has not as yet been able to rescue the notion of an atonement from one or another of these absurdities, either that God gave to himself the satisfaction which he demanded; or that God was satisfied by something given to him which was equally his own before; or that there are in the universe two independent infinite beings, one demanding infinite satisfaction, and the other affording the infinite satisfaction which was demanded. Let it also be considered, that God is the author of all the events which take place through the whole circle of nature. He is, as it were, the very soul of the universe, the grand energetic principle which animates, actuates, and governs the whole. Every other being must be dependent upon him, not only for his existence, but also for all his powers, capacities, and dispositions.

What

What *benevolence* therefore can spring up in the heart of any other being, of which he is not the cause? What goodness can we discover in any part of his dominion, which is not to be traced as a stream from the great fountain of perfection? Should any one undertake to oppose this reasoning, he must be necessitated to prove, either that there are other *original* causes in the universe independent on the Deity, or that certain effects take place without any cause for their existence; but I apprehend neither of these suppositions will be maintained; the conclusion therefore cannot be avoided, that if the Deity be propitious to his creatures, this must be owing entirely to his own free and uninfluenced goodness.*

Farther,

* Should it be contended by the Calvinist, that the benevolence of the Father to mankind consisted in *sending freely* his Son to redeem us, it readily may be replied, that this cannot be considered as any very great instance of love, if the sufferings and death of Christ actually *purchased* for sinners the favour of God. Now this the Calvinistic advocates for the doctrine of the atonement unequivocally declare, when they inform us, that Christ *merited* for mankind the favour of God, that his death was a *meritorious* death, that he *paid the full price* demanded by divine justice. The same sentiment is clearly expressed, when they say, at the conclusion of their prayers, that they ask every blessing *for the sake* of Christ. To magnify the love of God to sinners is as ridiculous upon

Farther, the doctrine of God being reconciled to man by any external consideration, *is inconsistent with the argument of the Apostle in my text.*

The object of the Apostle is to persuade Christians to love one another. This he attempts by employing a variety of powerful and influential arguments. In our text he recommends this indispensable Christian duty, by holding forth to our view the example of the great Supreme in his conduct towards us. He discovered his love, when we did not love him, by sending his Son to die for our redemption. Now if he sent his Son to discharge a debt which his justice rigorously exacted, and without the payment of which sinners could not be released from condemnation, the Apostle's language would then have urged it upon Christians *not* to love one another, if their brethren had committed any act of unkindness or injury against them; for this mode of conduct, upon this system, would be conformable to that of the Deity. But this is expressly contrary to the whole current of the Apostle's advice and argument, which recommends universal and un-

this scheme, as it would be to celebrate the clemency of a man who remitted the debt of a person who owed him a sum of money, after the creditor had persuaded some other person to satisfy the demand.

purchased

purchased love among Christian brethren. We must therefore conclude, either that the Apostle's illustration of his subject is inapplicable, or we must suppose that we do not justly interpret his language, when we consider him as asserting that Jesus Christ came to purchase from Deity his favour to mankind. The *former* supposition, that the Apostle's illustration is inconclusive, I apprehend you will consider rash to profess. We must then have recourse to the *latter* conclusion, that the calvinistic interpretation of Christ's being *a propitiation for our sins* is unjust. It behoves us, therefore, to seek for some paraphrase of the words more consistent with the Apostle's discourse.

Let us, with seriousness and industry, enquire what was the doctrine which this inspired Apostle taught concerning the divine scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, or what he actually meant by saying that God *sent his Son to be a propitiation concerning our sins*.

It is necessary to be remembered that the writers of the New Testament were all of them Jews, and strictly educated in the religious principles of that people; that their knowledge upon moral and theological subjects, previous to their reception of Christianity, was wholly derived from the Jewish writings; that consequently it must be expected, that in their discourses and letters we

should find many allusions and references to their own ritual; that their metaphors and illustrations should be taken from the subjects with which they were the most conversant. Thus we often find them speaking of *Jerusalem*, the *Temple*, the *vail* of the Temple, and many other *Jewish* particulars, as the common illustrations of their discourse. This we may expect to be more especially the case, when they are writing or speaking to their own countrymen. In explaining to *them* the Christian system, they would endeavour to introduce its doctrines into their understandings, by pointing out any resemblances there might be found between any of these doctrines and their own ritual. This was actually the case, you may easily perceive, in the epistle to the Hebrews. In this epistle the writer attempts to conquer the prejudices of the Jews, by shewing, very ingeniously, some points of resemblance in Christianity to almost every part of the Jewish system.

It is the business of Christians, who would understand the writings of the New Testament, to trace out these points of resemblance, by referring to the Old Testament scriptures. We are not to expect that the resemblance will hold in every particular, but only in those individual particulars which were intended to be illustrated. Thus when the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, "ye are the *Temple* of the living God," he cannot be understood

understood to refer to the shape or size of the building, or the materials of which it was composed; he means to inform them that they, like the Jewish temple, were consecrated to the divine service. When the apostle John speaks of the good man being "made a *pillar* in the "temple of God" in the new Jerusalem, he cannot mean that he should be made a pillar to support the celestial building, but that his situation should be permanent, and that, like pillars in a temple on which it was customary to suspend the trophies of victory,* he should exhibit the trophies of his conquest over temptation. Allow me to mention one instance more. When Paul says that our Saviour is appointed to be a *mercy-seat*, he cannot be understood to mean any thing more than that Jesus Christ, being the medium by which the divine will was made known to mankind under the Christian dispensation, resembled the *mercy-seat*, which was the place whence the divine oracle issued its instructions to the Jews.

This rational mode of interpretation let us apply to the words now under consideration; "God sent his "Son to be a *propitiation* concerning our sins." The term *propitiation* is a word borrowed from the Jewish ritual. It is a term commonly used to denominate the

* Vide Picteti Theologia, vol. 1. p. 43.

offering by which atonement was to be made for sin. The animal sacrificed on these occasions was called the *ram of propitiation*.* That this victim was offered to purchase pardon from the Deity for the offender, was an idea very far from being countenanced by the admission of sacrifices into the Jewish system; though the Jews in process of time perverted the divine intention respecting them, as Christians have perverted the divine intention in the death of Christ. What was the true origin of sacrifices in the world, it is not very easy to determine; perhaps they originated in the general practice of the inhabitants of Eastern countries to bring with them some valuable *present*† when they approached a superior. Nor is it easy to determine what was the intention in admitting them into the Jewish ritual; probably this was done in accommodation to the practice of surrounding nations. To determine how this may have been, is of no importance to the object we have now in view. It will be sufficient if it can be proved, that sacrifices were not instituted by the Jewish law, with a view to offer any valuable consideration to

* See the Septuagint version, Numbers v. 8, πλὴν τῷ κριῷ τῷ ἱλασμοῦ, δι' οὗ ἐξιλάσεται ἐν αὐτῷ περὶ αὐτοῦ.

† See *an Essay on the proper end of the Death of Christ*, in the Theological Repository, vol. i. p. 195.

the Deity, as an inducement to forgive the sins of the offerer. This may be demonstrated from a variety of passages in the Old Testament, in which the Jews are severely censured for entertaining this notion. In the 50th psalm Jehovah is represented as saying, "If I were hungry I would not till thee, for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God *thanksgiving*, and pay thy *vows* unto the most high." Thus also saith the prophet Micah: "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, *what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" Many other passages might be adduced to this purpose, but these are amply sufficient. Hence it appears, that a *valuable consideration paid to God* was not the point of resemblance which the Apostle discovered between the propitiatory victim, and the death of Christ.

Wherein then did the resemblance consist? What was there in the death of Christ to justify the allusion? Evidently this—It was the divine appointment that the covenant with the Jewish people should be attended
with

with *the death of the victims*, and that the universal covenant with mankind should be attended with *the death of Christ*. The wisdom of the *former* appointment may be made to appear from a variety of considerations. These ceremonial observances were in this infant state of divine revelation a wise compliance with the general practice of that part of the world; and by bringing something valuable from their property, they might evince the sincerity of their good dispositions. The wisdom of the *latter* appointment discovers itself with the clearest evidence. The death of Christ was a convincing proof of his divine mission; it gave his followers a specimen of true fortitude in circumstances the most trying; and it was an event absolutely necessary, previous to his resurrection,

The plain meaning therefore of the proposition in our text, that "God sent his son to be a propitiation concerning our sins," most probably is neither more nor less than the following, *that God thought fit to recover mankind from their sins, and to assure them of pardon and eternal salvation upon repentance, by means of a crucified Savior*. In this wise and benevolent institution, the great parent of the universe does indeed appear in a most amiable point of view, in the language of the eloquent Apostle, "reconciling the world, by Christ, unto himself, not imputing to them their iniquities."

Upon

Upon this interpretation, how clear, how beautiful, how unembarrassed, are all those passages of scripture, which ascribe our salvation, in its beginning, in its operation, and in its fulfilment, to the free, unmerited love of God, by the instrumentality of Jesus Christ our blessed and benevolent Lord!

Having already occupied too large a portion of your time, I must now conclude.

The subject, Christians, we have been considering is of great importance, and demands your diligent examination. Let therefore the divine rule of faith employ your daily study; and suffer not the authority of human opinions, how long so ever established, or by how large numbers so ever professed, be set in competition with the word of God. If, by having recourse to these sacred fountains of knowledge, your creed should become more scriptural, and consequently more rational, than that of your fellow Christians, be zealous in your endeavours to bring them over to the truth of the Gospel. Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Above all, bear it ever in mind, that no difference in opinion should prevent our esteem for the virtuous and sincere. Truly important to the improvement of our characters is a reasonable faith, and highly beneficial to the interests of truth is an ardent

ardent zeal for its propagation. But though your creed retained its primitive purity, and your zeal were equal to that of an Apostle, yet, if you have not charity you are nothing. However numerous, and however splendid, the other excellencies you possess, I beseech you to remember, that the greatest of all virtues is *charity*.



DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

I JOHN iv. 10, 11.

HEREIN IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT HE LOVED US, AND SENT HIS SON TO BE A PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS. BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE OUGHT ALSO TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

THIS passage teaches us three important truths:—

1st. *That God sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.*

2dly. *That the mission of Christ is a remarkable display of the divine goodness.*

3dly. *That this instance of the love of God, should induce us to love one another.*

For the illustration of the *first* proposition, I attempted to shew that the ideas which the term *propitiation* has been very generally understood to convey,
are

are very different from those intended by the sacred writers. That the Apostle did not mean to assert, that the sufferings and death of Christ pacified the Deity, who was incensed with mankind on account of their sins, or satisfied divine justice by paying the infinite debt due to it from sinners, I endeavoured to shew from a variety of considerations. That the Deity is ready to bestow a free pardon upon his penitent offspring evidently appeared from the light of nature, and the plain declarations of Scripture. The notion of any external consideration operating to render the Deity propitious, was proved to be repugnant to the great truth, that God is the author, proprietor, and governor of the universe. It was also demonstrated to be inconsistent with the Apostle's argument in the text. The word *propitiation* was shewn to be a phrase borrowed from the Jewish ritual, which, by enjoining sacrifices, never countenanced the idea of *purchasing* the divine favour, or making any change in the mind of God. It was then observed that the circumstance of resemblance which the Apostle discovered between Christ and the Jewish victims, most probably was, that the death of each was required as an important part of the divine scheme.

I now proceed to shew that *the mission of Christ to be a propitiation for our sins was a remarkable display of the divine*

divine goodness. “Herein is love, that though we
 “loved not God, he loved us, and sent his Son to
 “be a propitiation for our sins.”

That God is good, is proved by the constitution and general tendency of nature, and from the dispensations of Providence. How beautiful is the whole face of nature! The earth is filled with inhabitants of species astonishingly diversified, all capable in some degree of receiving what God is most ready to bestow, namely, happiness. Its surface is adorned with a rich variety of pleasing objects. Above it is spread a wide and beautiful canopy, in which the sun appears to move with resplendent majesty, whence the moon diffuses her milder rays, and in which ten thousand times ten thousand far distant lights contribute to embellish the variegated scene. Man is placed at the head of the inhabitants of this beauteous residence, and is constituted to receive such delightful impressions from the objects which surround him, as should lead him to adore the goodness of his Maker, and enable him to indulge the hope of something still better in the maturer ages of his being. All the events of human life, under the wise direction of heaven, are constantly tending towards a state of higher improvement, and seem to promise the arrival of a time when all evil natural and moral shall be no more. Far fairer than I can delineate is the prospect exhibited to
 our

our view. But as in a beautiful landscape there is generally some one delightful spot, which more particularly fixes the attention of the beholder; so in the universal display of the divine benevolence, there is one object which more irresistibly captivates the heart. This object is the Gospel. Upon this the rays of the divine goodness seem to shine with unclouded lustre.

To be properly impressed with this instance of the love of God, we should consider *the importance of the blessing bestowed.*

This, in the emphatical language of the apostle Paul, is, "salvation and eternal glory." The great Administrator of the world was pleased to suffer the minds of men to be darkened with the most deplorable errors, to be in a great measure "without hope, and without God in the world." His reasons for thus limiting their views of himself and the provision made for them, were undoubtedly wise and benevolent; perhaps to give a proof to the considerate mind that the state of the world was rising, under his government, to a higher pitch of improvement; to lead those, who enjoy the benefits of the gospel, to be grateful for their superior privileges, and to induce them to set a proper value upon them. But whatever might be the intentions of infinite wisdom in this respect, it is a fact, that the pagan world knew so
little

little of the attributes of God, and the ends of his government, that they could not rest upon it as an indubitable truth, that all offences would be forgiven to the penitent, and that reformation and obedience would invariably lead to happiness. They saw that there was one event to the righteous and the wicked. The perpetrator of fraud and villainy did not always injure, nor did the virtuous and the reformed always apparently improve his external circumstances. Nay, they might have seen vice triumphant, while virtue was in chains. They might wish, but they could scarcely believe, that these inequalities would be rectified hereafter. The doctrine of a future state, that great clue to direct us through the labyrinths of life, was very imperfectly discovered; and the clouds which veiled this glorious truth from their eyes, cast a melancholy gloom over every other speculation relating to the Great Supreme, to his attributes, to his providence, and to the designs of his dispensations. How important therefore is the blessing of the Gospel, in which we read it recorded in characters the most radiant, "that there is one Lord "over all, who is rich unto all who call upon him;" that this great being "is reconciling the world by "Christ, to himself, not imputing to them their iniquities;" and that whoever obeys the commandments of Christ "shall not perish, but obtain everlasting life!"

Let

Let us also attend to *the Divine Majesty*. The author of our salvation is the great God of heaven, the self-existent JEHOVAH; he who fills universal nature with his presence; who created the innumerable clusters of worlds, suns, and systems, which are scattered through unmeasurable space; whose Almighty power upholds them in being; whose consummate skill prescribes their various laws. He who thus exercised the compassion of a parent towards us the frail inhabitants of the dust, is infinitely superior to every other existence; the highest archangel is dazzled when he beholds his glory; the most comprehensive mind, among the exalted inhabitants of the celestial world, in vain will strive to grasp an adequate idea of his greatness. Our Redeemer is the Holy One, the LORD of Hosts, who is surrounded by myriads of pure and intelligent spirits, and who stoops when he attends to their refined worship. *Lord! what then is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of man, that thou visitest him?* Herein indeed is love, that this infinitely glorious Being should condescend to compassionate the frail and erring children of men, to raise up for them a Prince and a Saviour, to enable him to teach them in the way of holiness, and to inform them upon subjects which the limited powers of man had not been able to discover, to vouchsafe to him a miraculous energy for the confirmation of his doctrine, and to raise him from the dead

dead as a proof that mankind are to exist in another world.

Let us consider also *the persons who were thus benefited.* "Herein is love, that though we loved not God, he "loved us." When God was pleased to interpose for the redemption of men, they had forgotten their Creator, and rendered their homage to numberless creatures of their own imaginations. They had also become peculiarly unamiable by their vices, rebellious against the laws of his government, and enemies to God by wicked works. Had we been a race of beings who were merely *ignorant*, and who made the best use of the imperfect light afforded us, then the improvement of what we had received might have justified the expectation of something more. In this case our good conduct might have been a reason why a wise and benevolent Creator should have indulged us with some peculiar marks of his favour. Not such was the case with us. We were unprofitable servants, who, by abusing the information that nature afforded, obscured our prospects; by acts of vice impaired our understandings, or by indolence enervated their powers. What had we therefore to expect but the disapprobation and chastisement of our Maker? But, says the apostle Paul, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that *while* "we were yet *sinners* Christ died for us."

D

Let

Let us farther attend to *the terms upon which we are made partakers of the blessings of the gospel*. Reasoning from the common maxims and conduct of mankind, we should have concluded, that such transgressors would not have been received into favour, without passing through some severe and painful discipline, for the sake of humbling the hardy offenders, and of bending them to submission. Far otherwise were we treated by the benevolent parent of mankind. "Though all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, yet we are justified *freely* by his grace, through the deliverance that is by Christ Jesus." The *only* condition (if a *condition* it may be called) is *repentance*; by which term is not meant any peculiarly painful sensations of remorse and sorrow, but only a change of temper and renovation of conduct. Far, very far, is the gospel from proposing those humiliating terms of acceptance, or those arbitrary tests of conversion, which are too often held forth to scare the humble penitent. You are not required (to use language which is commonly heard) *to believe you are about to fall into the pit of endless misery, to feel convictions harrowing up your souls, or the law of God like a poisoned dagger rankling at your hearts.** No, my friends, our benevolent Creator delights

* Language similar to this you may read in a sermon lately preached by the Rev. Dr. Davies, at the ordination of the Rev. James

delights not to behold the consciences of his offspring torn with remorse, or their minds appalled by the apprehensions of future misery. He guards not the tree of life with a flaming sword, nor surrounds with horrors the footstool of his throne of mercy. Far is the Author of all compassion from being inexorable to the cries of his children. He hears the softest sigh of the penitent heart. He perceives the first wishful glance towards him and virtue. He proposes no terms but that we relinquish vice, and that we love and practise holiness. These are the tests he proposes of the persons qualified for his favour, and to such he promises all the blessings of Christianity. This subject may be well illustrated by the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, to which

D 2

I have

James Knight. "What did you feel, Christians, when a
 "conviction of sin was planted in your consciences; when
 "your crimes were set before you in all their number and
 "aggravations; when guilt oppressed your souls as an intol-
 "erable load; when you felt yourselves bound in the chains
 "of your sins; when AN OFFENDED GOD APPEARED TO
 "FROWN AWFULLY UPON YOU, and the dreadful gulph of
 "misery gaped to receive you?" Surely the father of our
 spirits cannot delight to torture us with such feelings as these:
 yet such Mr. Bogue represents as a criterion of the right faith,
 and the immediate effect of that faith when cordially em-
 braced.—See a sermon by the Rev. David Bogue of Gos-
 port, on "the importance of having right sentiments in
 religion," p. 15.

I have before directed your attention. The Prodigal said, "I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto him, Father! I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thine hired servants!" This prayer he premeditated as proper to be said on his return. He arose, and went. When he was yet afar off, the father beheld him coming; he had compassion; he waited not for his self-reproaches; he ran; he fell upon his neck and kissed him. The skill of our divine instructor is here worthy of observation. The father suffered not the prodigal to finish the penitential speech he had prepared to utter, but gave orders that he should be entertained and adorned as his son.

It is a gross mistake, which derogates from the goodness of God, and from the glory of the gospel, that before we are allowed to walk in the light of the divine countenance, our consciences are to be overwhelmed with unutterable anguish. That the gospel is not clogged with any such painful conditions is evident from various examples in the New Testament. The Ethiopian nobleman, when he was convinced of the truth of the gospel, immediately "went on his way rejoicing." The jailor, when informed what he must do to be saved, "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." When the inhabitants of Samaria embraced

embraced the gospel preached by the Evangelist Philip, it is said "there was great joy in that city." Thus it appears that the effects produced upon these early converts, immediately on their reception of Christianity, were quite the reverse of those which are too often required in more modern times. The doctrine of the gospel is indeed the doctrine of *free grace*. Its language is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Once more: the unrivalled goodness of God in the gospel dispensation appears from reflecting upon *the universality of its benefits*.

The blessings conveyed by Christianity are not confined, like those of the Jewish dispensation, to one family, but extended to the whole world. Under this new covenant with mankind there is no difference between Jew and Greek. Its privileges are not restricted to any peculiar favourites of heaven, selected by an arbitrary decree out of the general mass of mankind, but "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness shall be accepted of him." They are universally *diffusive* without respect of persons, families, or kingdoms.

The gospel indeed at first was little known, and is not yet published over all the world. It did not seem proper to infinite wisdom, that its splendors should at once illuminate the whole face of the earth. In this the Deity acted agreeably to his usual plan of operation in the works of providence. Infinitely diversified are the circumstances of human beings. Some live under a temperate sun, in a gentle climate, surrounded not only with the necessaries, but also with the delicacies of life; while others are either scorched from above by perpendicular rays, and from beneath by burning sands, with scarce the shadow of a rock or tree to shelter their heads, and scarce a spring of water to allay their thirst; or, dwelling in the polar regions, they are constrained to roam after their food over mountains of perpetual snow. The conduct of the Almighty, in making the blessings of Christianity known to the world, is analogous to his usual conduct towards mankind. As *individuals* we pass through the various imperfect stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, before we attain to manhood. Our *species* also at first was furnished with few of the comforts of life, and of the means of knowledge and improvement; but in these respects we gradually improve, and the general tendency towards perfection is evident.

There

There is no injustice in this plan of conduct either in the common dispensations of providence, or in those of religion, so long as in the former case we all enjoy a greater share of happiness than we suffer of misery, and in the latter case so long as we are assured that a man shall be treated *according to what he had, and not according to what he had not.* The divine Parabolist illustrates the scheme of the Almighty, by “a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” This grain was sown by an inhabitant of Judæa, in a soil apparently unfavourable to its growth; but under the superintending providence of God, it soon made strong and vigorous shoots; the leaves of the tree have already become the healing of the nations; and from present appearances we may expect it will continue to flourish, ’till its branches overshadow the whole earth.

Such are the considerations which set forth the greatness of the love of God in our salvation; “the importance of the blessing bestowed; the infinite majesty of its divine author; the situation of the persons benefited; the terms upon which we are made partakers of the benefits; and the universality of their distribution.”

Allow

Allow me, however, before I conclude this part of the subject, to observe, that those of you who, by a sincere repentance, have become partakers of the salvation of the gospel, have the firmest foundation for the most unbounded confidence in the divine goodness amidst all the vicissitudes of life. “He that spared
 “not his own son, but gave him up for us all, how
 “shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” You may meet with troubles; you may be tried with disappointments; but your lot is ordered by consummate wisdom and boundless benevolence. You may rest assured that every dispensation of Providence is designed for your advantage; that it will tend to purify your hearts, to refine your motives, and thus to prepare you for eternal felicity; which is the consummation of that glorious scheme, for which you are indebted to the God of all grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord,



DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

I JOHN IV. 10, 11.

HEREIN IS LOVE, NOT THAT WE LOVED GOD, BUT THAT HE LOVED US, AND SENT HIS SON TO BE A PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS. BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE OUGHT ALSO TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

HAVING already explained the meaning of the proposition, that God sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and enlarged upon the magnitude of the divine love in this interposition on the behalf of mankind, I shall now proceed, in *the third place*, to consider *the inference which the Apostle draws from this instance of divine love*; “beloved, if God so love dus, we “ought also to love one another.”

Brotherly love was a favourite theme with this benevolent Apostle. “Little children, love one another,” is an important precept, which he often repeats and enforces. Ancient writers inform us that the apostle John lived at Ephesus to an extreme old age. Being with difficulty carried to church in the arms of the disciples,
and

and unable to undertake the fatigue of a long discourse, each time they assembled, he was accustomed only to say, "Little children, love one another." The disciples and brethren being at length wearied by hearing the same sentence so frequently repeated, said, "Sir! why "do you always say this?" To whom he made this answer worthy of himself; "because it is the Lord's "command, and if that alone be done it is sufficient." The command to which he alluded in this anecdote, and in many parts of his epistles, is recorded by by this same Apostle in his gospel. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, "if ye have love one to another."

By *loving one another* may be intended in general, such a mutual affection as will lead us to employ every proper means to promote each other's comfort and advantage.

To this duty we are prompted by the very constitution of our nature. The whole race of mankind may be very justly considered as one community, organized by its Supreme Governor, with such consummate skill and contrivance, that all the parts are mutually dependent on each other. To each individual in this large and compact society, his proper station is assigned, in which
he

he may act with the greatest effect, and where his powers may be exerted for the general benefit. This large body is animated as it were by a spirit of benevolence, with which the all-wise Creator hath inspired it. In the constitution of the *natural body* the several parts are adapted to promote the advantage of the other members: the hands and the feet, the eyes and the ears, assist each other in the purposes of life. The well-being of the whole animal machine depends upon the harmonious co-operation of all its parts. Thus in the great *body of mankind*, should each individual act merely for his own gratification, and his views terminate there, of what use are all the social feelings planted in his bosom, all the powers of benefiting others, and of receiving benefit from them, with which his Creator has endowed him? He would act in direct contradiction to the dictates of his nature, and render many laws of his constitution needless; and if such conduct were universal, a total stagnation would be produced in the affairs of the world.

In order to estimate the reasonableness and utility of any principles, it is proper to enquire, what would be the consequence if they were to prevail universally. If the consequence would be general order and happiness, we may conclude that the conduct is right, and worthy to be pursued. If the consequence would be general
confusion

confusion and misery, it should be carefully avoided by every reasonable being. Let this remark be applied to the subject now under consideration. If universal philanthropy were to prevail amongst men, how many calamities of human life would be alleviated! nay, how near would the situation of mankind approach to absolute perfection in happiness! But if on the other hand the principle of selfishness, carried to its full extent, were practised by all; if every one was wholly intent upon personal gratification, and the advantage of mankind was in every instance to submit to gross self-interest, what a theatre of unhappiness would this world become! The flames of discord would glare around us; the noise of war would incessantly roar in our ears; and we should be constantly presented with a scene of carnage and bloodshed. In such a state who would wish to dwell? Yet such is the condition to which this unamiable principle would reduce us. And this consequence must follow in exact proportion to the prevalence of this principle. It appears then that true self-interest would dictate a different course, and teach to seek individual happiness by attempting to promote the welfare of mankind.

Every man, whether he be willing or not to believe it, will find that a very great share of his comfort depends upon the good-will of his fellow-men. He will
find

find there are a thousand mutual good offices in human life, which taken separately may appear insignificant, but which when taken in the aggregate must be considered as contributing largely to the sum of our happiness. But these good offices of mankind the man of selfishness will not experience. He may purchase the servile attention of his dependents; but the amiable will shun him; those whose interests clash with his will insult him; and he will be generally hated as the common enemy of the human race. On the contrary, the man of benevolence, who lives not for himself, but for the world, who melts with sympathy for the distressed, who is moved with compassion for the afflicted, whose hand is readily stretched forth to relieve the children of sorrow, experiences the grateful returns of mankind, gains the applauses of the wise and good, and the blessings of those who are ready to perish come upon him. His character exerts an energy, which strikes dumb the tongue of calumny, which palsies the hand of malice, and which constrains the bitterest enemy to sue for peace.

I might now enlarge upon the *mental satisfaction* which the man of benevolence experiences; a satisfaction arising from the good opinion, and the kind attention of the best of mankind; from the conviction of having contributed to the happiness of others; from the consideration of having discharged his duty and answered the

the

the end of his existence; and especially from a well-grounded confidence in the favour and friendship of God: a satisfaction which, amidst the troubles and changes of life, affords a peace of mind, not to be disturbed by temporal calamities.—I might expatiate upon the rank in which the great moralist of Nazareth has placed all the branches of benevolence among the Christian virtues, and the peculiar rewards he has promised to those who excel in the practice of them.—I might dwell at large upon the necessity of cultivating habits of benevolence, arising from our hopes of existing in another world, in which those alone who cultivate the social virtues can expect to be happy. Upon these and many other inducements to the duty of loving one another I might insist; but it is now proper for me to bring forwards the argument of our text derived from the love of God towards us. “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

The propriety and force of the Apostle's argument will appear from two considerations:

1st. If God has so loved us, we ought *out of gratitude* to love one another.

2dly. If God has discovered his love towards us, *we ought to imitate his conduct.*

Infinite

Infinite are the obligations we owe to the Almighty for the scheme and execution of our salvation. How important is the blessing itself, how full of information to the beclouded mind of man, how full of comfort to his disconsolate heart! How great the condescension of the self-existent and eternal JEHOVAH, that he, who stoops to behold the things that are done in heaven, should be thus mindful of the mean inhabitants of houses of clay! How transcendent his goodness in exercising compassion towards us, though we were enemies to him by wicked works! How wonderful his clemency, that we should be made partakers of these invaluable blessings upon terms with which it is so easy to comply! How unrivalled his benevolence, that it should extend to all without ~~destruction~~ or respect of persons! These favours lay a powerful claim to our warmest gratitude. They should render us anxious to make some acknowledgement of our obligations, to give some proof that the divine goodness has not been lost upon us, and that our hearts are not insensible to the invaluable blessings of the gospel. "But can man
 "be profitable to God? Can his goodness extend to
 "the Most High?" "Shall we come before JEHOVAH,
 "and bow ourselves before the high God, and testify
 "our gratitude by burnt-offerings and calves of a year
 "old? Shall we give our first-born for our transgres-
 "sion, or the fruit of our bodies for the sin of our
 "souls?"

distinction

“souls? He hath shewed us, what he requires of us, “namely, to do justice, and to love mercy.” To express our thanks by our behaviour to his offspring; and by yielding ourselves as the willing instruments of his providence, to diffuse virtue and happiness in the world. These are the means we are directed to employ for the expressions of our gratitude.

Again, If God has discovered his love towards us, we ought to imitate his conduct.

It has always been considered, that the moral attributes of the great Governor of the world should be the objects of imitation by his rational creatures. In the heathen world these attributes were not clearly discovered, of course the track of human duty was proportionably uncertain. Under the Christian dispensation the perfections of God are more accurately defined; and we are exhorted to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect; to propose the various parts of his moral character as the objects of our imitation; to strive that the image of God, in which we were originally created, should evidently appear enstamped upon us; to endeavour that, being the offspring of God, we may gain some resemblance to our Father who is in heaven, and thus become the proper objects of his complacency. From this revelation, as well as from
the

the appearances of nature, we discover goodness to be the leading feature in his character. We are told that "God is love;" that his very essence is goodness, and that all his other perfections are only modifications of it. We are also exhorted to "be merciful, even as our Father in heaven is merciful," *i. e.* after examining the marks of divine goodness in the face of the world around us, in the dispensations of Providence, and in the revelation of the gospel, to imitate in our connexions with society the conduct of Deity, and to regulate by his example our behaviour to our friends, to our enemies, and to all mankind.

The circumstances attending the divine goodness in the gospel dispensation point out the different branches of human benevolence.

The importance of the advantages we derive from Christianity, teaches us that our benevolence should be *large and liberal*. The divine favours were the most valuable that can possibly be imagined, tending to rescue us from the vassalage of vice, and to place us under the easy government of holiness; to afford strong consolation to the mind under all the changes of life; and to enable us to obtain eternal happiness. If then it be our duty to imitate the example of God, we should make *great attempts* for the advantage of mankind; not

E

contenting

contenting ourselves with narrow views and feeble exertions, but forming some valuable schemes of benevolence, and prosecuting these schemes with the utmost energy of our minds.

We are directed to condescending kindness towards *our inferiors*; that there is no situation in which we are placed above the obligation of attending to the duties of benevolence; that we should not retreat from the most abject scenes of wretchedness, in our search for the objects of compassion; that there are none of the human race, whatever contemptuous ideas may have been associated with their country or their *complexion*, who are unworthy of our compassionate and vigorous exertions. To this condescension we are directed by reflecting upon the infinite majesty of that great Being who is the author of our salvation; who, though surrounded by an innumerable host of pure and exalted intelligencies, did not overlook us the insignificant children of men, but raised up for us a Prince and a Saviour, and constantly afforded him the aids of divine power, by which he was enabled to compleat the gracious purposes of his mission.

The consideration of *our vicious condition*, when God was pleased to manifest his goodness; that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, although

though we loved not him, teaches us *forgiveness*, and not only forgiveness, but *kindness to our enemies*; that no provocations, however numerous, will be sufficient to justify us in hatred and malevolence.

The example of divine goodness shews us *the conditions* on which we should admit offenders to our favour; that we should not insist upon any humiliating terms, nor withhold forgiveness until we have received a full satisfaction for the injuries offered us; but that we should seek for no farther atonement than unfeigned sorrow, and a change of conduct. This we are taught by the *free pardon* to penitent sinners, which God has published in his gospel, without punishing sin in their own persons, or the person of a substitute, without demanding any other satisfaction or compensation than penitence, and without insisting upon any painful conditions previous to their obtainment of his favour; but willingly bestowing the most important of all blessings upon the most heinous offenders, merely on their reformation and return to obedience.

We are also instructed by *the liberality* of the divine goodness in the gospel, that our benevolence should not be *partial and circumscribed*. Christianity assures us, that “there is but one Lord over all, who is good
“unto all who call upon him, and that in every nation

“ he who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall
 “ be accepted of him.” No narrow circle therefore
 should circumscribe our beneficence. It should extend
 beyond our families to our friends; beyond our friends,
 to our country, its improvement in civilization, know-
 ledge, virtue, liberty, dignity, and happiness; beyond
 the limits of our country, to the world at large, free
 and diffusive as the light of heaven.

Before I conclude, permit me to mention some few
 reflections suggested to us by the subject we have been
 considering,

Does it not appear to you *that we should be solicitous
 to render to the Almighty that praise which his goodness
 demands?* Infinite is our debt of gratitude, and the
 returns we can make bear no proportion to our obli-
 gations. These, however, small as they are, the kind-
 ness of God leads him compassionately to accept. Let
 us not therefore withhold any of that honour which is
 his due, nor dare to ascribe that glory to any of his
 creatures, to which he has so powerful a claim. While
 we feel all proper respect to our great Master, on account
 of his ardent piety and his unspotted virtue, and espe-
 cially every degree of gratitude that his good-will to
 mankind demands; let us be careful lest we derogate
 from the divine benevolence, by representing Christ as
 the

the procuring cause of our redemption, or as any thing more than an instrument employed in the hands of God for this purpose, or by attributing our salvation to any other source than the uninfluenced love of God to his offspring.

The divine goodness, though manifested to sinners, is far from affording the least encouragement to vice. “ Shall we “ continue in sin, because grace does abound? God “ forbid.” The blessings of the gospel are promised only to the penitent; they, however great their offences, shall obtain them. But there is not a single promise which can be embraced by the man who indulges himself in habitual vice. The gospel is a scheme to form men to virtue, abounding with the most efficacious motives for this purpose. It exhibits the great Supreme as ready to pardon the offender, and to bestow upon him everlasting life; but it lays down these conditions, that he abandon his vices, and return to obedience. It appears hence that those who pervert the divine goodness in the Christian dispensation into an encouragement to vice, are wholly mistaken as to the nature of Christianity; they have *neither part nor lot in this matter; their hearts are not right in the sight of God.*

But though the gospel gives no relief to those who continue in the practice of vice, *it affords hope to the*

vilest offender on his undissembled penitence. It makes no exceptions to any, but declares that "whosoever will" "may take of the water of life freely." With respect to the sin against the Holy Ghost, and the awful threatenings annexed to it; it is probable, this crime was peculiar to the first ages of Christianity; and the threatening that it should not be forgiven in this world, or in that which was to come, the whole tenor of scripture will not allow us to interpret literally, but directs us to consider as a bold Eastern expression, signifying the peculiar enormity of the offence, whatever it may be. Being such imperfect beings, so subject to be corrupted by the influence of evil example and the powerful impulse of our passions, and unable wholly to escape the noxious contagion of vice, what consolation is it, that a contrite heart is a sacrifice which our heavenly Father will not despise!

The God of mercy is willing to embrace the repenting sinner, however aggravated his offences; but it is an awful consideration that *this repentance may be deferred until it has become impossible.* Youth is the season in which it may be most easily obtained. Let the young remember that now is the accepted time. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." You are required to relinquish none of your innocent amusements, to forego none of the

the gratifications which tend to promote your happiness. On your return also to God and virtue, new sources of pleasure will open themselves to your view. To associate with every scene of life the idea of an infinitely powerful, wise, and good Being, as our friend and protector, diffuses such cheerfulness through the heart, produces such serenity of mind, as cannot be darkened or disturbed by any occurrence of life. To have God, as it were, constantly before our eyes, gives a double relish to all the enjoyments of earth; it is a perennial spring of pleasure flowing ever clear and refreshing. But remember, that the repentance which now may be easily accomplished, will be rendered gradually more difficult by delay. Habits will be formed, which will be strengthened by each act, and at length become invincible. Pitiabie is the state of those who have arrived at the middle stage of life, and are still "dead in trespasses and sins." Few at that period are able to subdue the force of their evil habits. Still more awful is the condition of those, who have persevered in a vicious course even to old age; little less than a miracle can alter the corrupt bias of their minds. But deplorable above all is the state of those who defer the most important of all concerns, to the most precarious of all seasons, the season of sickness and death. "The day of mercy" will then be over. Alarmed by a reflexion on their past lives, and terrified by the prospect
before

before them, they may call upon the Father of mercies, but he will not be found; loud and earnest may be their intreaties, but they will not be heard.

Let it be the immediate concern of each individual, that with respect to him, the end which the Almighty had in view in sending his Son to be a propitiation for our sins should be answered.

Shall the great Governor of the world make such kind proposals to the penitent prodigal, and shall we presumptuously reject them? Shall the compassion of God be treated with ingratitude and neglect? Beholding that radiance of divine benevolence discovered in the offer of a free pardon to offenders, shall we treat it with contempt, and prefer the slavery of sin? With the unclouded prospect of a glorious immortality, and a dreadful view of the gulph of misery, shall we not strive to ensure the one, and to escape the other? In vain shall we hope for any advantages from the redemption that is by Christ Jesus, if our minds are not purified from sin. Empty and vain will be the name of Christians, unless we are conformed to the image of him whose name we have assumed. Our privileges will only aggravate our condemnation, and sink us into deeper ruin.

Finally;

Finally; *Let us pay a principal attention to the great duty enjoined upon us in our text.* Love, we are told, is the fulfilling of the law. Men have presumed to propose various tests of a good character. But we hear from an Apostle, that "God is love, and that he who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Let then the self-righteous bigot thunder his anathemas. Let the world, on account of your profession of the pure and undefiled religion, cast out your name as evil, and load you with calumnies; you need not be affected by their curses and reproaches; you may even smile at their envy and their rage, while you are able to hold forth a living argument in the benevolence of your conduct, that you are the genuine disciples of Christ. Remember the emphatical words of your great master; "*by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*"



APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

P A R T I.

Remarks upon Four Discourses on Christ Crucified.

BY THE LATE CALEB EVANS, D. D.

Αληθευόντες δε εν αγαπη.

PAUL.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

I N writing upon controversial subjects, especially upon those of a theological nature, it is of primary importance, that our definitions should be clear, and our language unambiguous. When the precise meaning of an author cannot be discovered in his writings, we are justified in suspecting, either that he has not himself a clear conception of his subject, or that he does not intend to give any precise ideas upon it to his readers. When an author does not intend to give his
readers

readers precise ideas, there is reason to conclude, that he has some other object in view than the investigation and diffusion of truth: such, for example, as to exhibit his prowess in the overthrow of an opposite opinion, or to attach his readers to certain notions, in the support of which his temporal interest is concerned, and which, if fully and clearly stated, might appear incapable of a rational defence. This perhaps is the true source of ambiguity in the writings of those persons who are interested in the support of established creeds. The well-known and respectable character of the late Dr. EVANS, and the circumstance of his being a Protestant Dissenting Minister, in which situation he could not have expected any tolerable recompence for the trouble and guilt of temporizing, induce me rather to suppose that his want of precision in his *sermons on Christ crucified*, arose from imperfect conceptions of the doctrine on which he wrote. I am confirmed in this opinion by the good sense and liberality he discovered upon many other subjects. Had he attempted to gain clear ideas on the doctrine of the atonement as held by Calvinists, he would perhaps have found it totally incomprehensible; or if he could have obtained any precise notions concerning it, they might have appeared to him absurd and shocking; in either of which cases it is likely he would have rejected the doctrine entirely.

He

He has nowhere given us an accurate definition of what he intended by the terms *atonement*, or *Christ crucified*. He speaks of *an atoning Saviour*, of the death of Christ as a *meritorious death*, and as a *vicarious sacrifice*. But these phrases are reconcileable with any hypothesis concerning the death of Christ. It is however certain, that he used the term *atonement* in the usual Calvinistic sense, as signifying a price paid by Christ to divine justice for the discharge of the debt which sinners had contracted, or, in other words, as a valuable consideration offered to Deity by which his anger towards sinners was appeased. That this was his meaning we gather from several expressions in different parts of his discourses. He informs us* that "sinners can only be saved through the vicarious merits and expiatory death of Christ." The sufferings of Christ he terms† "the piacular sufferings of an atoning Saviour." He represents the doctrine of the atonement‡ as "the doctrine of salvation by the merits of another, instead of our own." He speaks§ of "trusting to the righteousness of another for salvation;" and§ of "the penal piacular sufferings of the Son of God." The sacrifices practised in early ages he considers* "as originating in the divine command, which was given in reference to the mode which infinite wisdom
" had

* p. 71. † p. 72. ‡ p. 80. § p. 83. § p. 122. * p. 146.

“ had ordained for the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of “ Christ.” These sacrifices he speaks of as designed to “ APPEASE AN ANGRY DEITY;” he must therefore have considered the sacrifice of Christ, (an event they were in his view intended to prefigure) as operating in the same manner.

On these grounds I think myself justified in taking it for granted that, by Christ making an atonement, Dr. Evans meant, *that he satisfied God, or his Justice, by enduring in his own person all that punishment which sinners would have suffered through eternity.*

It is truly painful to reflect that the religion of Christ has been disgraced for many centuries by such a monstrous tenet. Its irrationality, when it is fairly stated, is so exceedingly palpable, that one is surprised that even habit and interest should have power sufficient to rescue it from the universal abhorrence of mankind.



C H A P. I.

On the Doctrine which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

THE texts which Dr. Evans employs as the foundation of his discourses, is that passage 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

What the Apostle meant by *Christ crucified*, a doctrine so offensive to Jews and Greeks, is worthy of our investigation. Who were the persons to whom this epistle was written? It was written to the Christians at Corinth, a city distinguished by its zeal on philosophical subjects. Here the members of different sects, and the disciples of different masters, contended warmly for the superiority. In imitation of the gentile unbelievers, and perhaps carrying with them into their new profession their old habits of reverence for the names of their instructors, the Corinthian converts considered each of the several Apostles and Evangelists as the leader of a distinct party. Thus they said, "I am of
" Paul,

“ Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas.” This disposition to pay an improper respect to their spiritual instructors the Apostle reproves: “ Is Christ divided? “ Was Paul crucified for you?”

To shew that Christianity was not to be supported in the manner which the philosophers employed to support their respective tenets, he tells them, that “ Christ “ sent him to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of “ words, (*οχι εν σοφια λογω*) lest the cross of Christ should “ be made of none effect. For the preaching of the “ cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us “ who are saved it is the power of God.” The gospel did not require the aid of ingenious disquisition. It was merely a matter of fact, which the plain, unlettered man could understand and promulgate, as well as the person of the most refined genius and the most cultivated mind. He who was capable of bearing a credible testimony to a matter of fact was endowed with sufficient powers to become a preacher of the gospel. Thus the Apostle says, “ It is written, I will destroy the “ wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent.”

The plain fact, the truth of which the early Christians testified, was, that *Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had proved by miracles to be the Messiah, though murdered*

dered by the Jews, rose again from the grave on the third day. This was the testimony of Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Jesus of Nazareth, who has been proved "to be a man sent to you from God, by miracles, and "wonders, and signs, ye have taken, and by wicked "hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised "up, having loosed the pains of death."* On another occasion, when Peter and others of the Apostles were brought before the high priest, they declared, "the God "of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and "hanged on a tree."† The language of Peter to Cornelius on this subject is very remarkable. We find here a clear and explicit definition of the doctrine of *Christ crucified*. Cornelius had been instructed by a vision to send for Peter;‡ and Peter was supernaturally directed to comply with the invitation. He comes to the house of the pious heathen, who intreats him to deliver his commission, and declares his anxiety to "hear *all* the things "that were commanded to Peter by God." The Apostle professes to explain fully "the word which God sent to "the children of Israel, and which was preached "throughout all Judea; how that God anointed Jesus "of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both "in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom

F

" they

* Acts ii. 22, &c.

† Acts v. 30.

‡ Acts x.

" they flew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up
 " on the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all
 " the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God,
 " who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the
 " dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the
 " people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained
 " of God to be the judge of the living and the dead.
 " To him give all the prophets witness, that through
 " his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive
 " remission of sins."

This is an excellent, and from the circumstances of
 the case, we may conclude, a comprehensive epitome of
 apostolical preaching. Its articles are, that Jesus was
 the Messiah predicted by the prophets; that he was
 slain by the Jews, and rose from the dead; that he as-
 cended to heaven, whence he is to return as the judge
 of the world; and that by a belief in his doctrines
 mankind are to gain an assurance that their sins will be
 forgiven on their repentance, and that they may attain
 to everlasting life. These, being the topics of the
 Apostle's discourses, were *the fooliness of preaching*, of
 which Paul speaks to the Corinthians. These also, with-
 out doubt, and these only, so far as appears, composed
 the doctrine of *Christ crucified*, which was to the Jews
 a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

What

What in this preaching was so offensive to the *Jews* we shall discover, by making some enquiries into their expectations respecting the Messiah.

It is universally allowed, that, about the time of Christ's appearance, the Jews were in general expectation of a conquering Prince, to fight their battles, to rescue them from their subjection to the Roman government, and to render the Jewish name the admiration and terror of the world. So elated were the Jews with the idea, that it required the utmost policy of Rome to restrain them from rebellion.* When Jesus of Nazareth, therefore, commenced his ministry, and professed to be the long-expected Messiah, they treated his pretensions with ridicule; but when they found many were convinced of the divinity of his mission, they conceived it necessary to make some more serious opposition. Their inveteracy increased in the same proportion with the number of his disciples. At length, mad with disappointment, they led him away with a crown of thorns placed in derision on his head, and crucified him with a contemptuous inscription on his cross, *This is the King of Jews*.

* Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus & constans opinio: esse in fatis, ut eo tempore gudæi profecti rerum potirentur. Id de Imperatore Romano, quantum eventu postea prædictum patuit gudæi ad se trahentes, rebellarunt. Suetonius in Vespas. c. 4. See also Bishop Chandler's *Defence of Christianity*, chap. i. sec. 1.

His steady opposition to the superstition and hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees; his declaration to the people, that unless their righteousness exceeded that of their blind leaders, they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven; and his maintaining that the Christian covenant comprehended all the nations of the earth, as well as the descendants of Abraham, tended to excite strong prejudices against him: but from the rage they always discovered when he denominated himself the Messiah, the Son of God, from the claim he made to this character being the ground of their accusation against him, and from the readiness with which his guilt was allowed by the High Priest when Jesus declared that he was the Christ, we may, I apprehend, conclude, that his pretensions to a character so different from their expectations, was the principal cause of their inveteracy.

The *Greeks*, accustomed to reverence the names of those philosophers whose respective systems had acquired for their authors very extensive fame, could not be expected to be brought easily to acknowledge for their master Jesus of Nazareth, a man from among the lower classes of the community, an inhabitant of a country which they despised as the seat of superstition, one who was distinguished by no literary advantages, and who was at length crucified by his countrymen as a common malefactor.

factor. Besides, these heathens were prejudiced against the cause of Christianity by the situation of the bulk of those persons who were its adherents. They were men of no considerable eminence, either from their fortunes or their endowments. These and other causes conspired to prevent them from embracing the gospel. "The Jews, said Paul, require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

Thus it appears, that the cause which prevented the Jews and the Gentiles from receiving Christianity, was the apparent meanness of its author, and particularly the ignominious circumstance of his crucifixion. This, considering the prejudices of the persons to whom the gospel was preached, may be esteemed an adequate cause for the effects which were produced. Nor are we justified in supposing that any farther idea was implied in the terms *Christ crucified*, unless this can be deduced from some plain expressions of the Apostle.

But Dr. EVANS affirms it* to be "a fact as clear and evident as that Paul existed, or ever preached at all, that he meant by preaching Christ crucified, preaching Christ as an ATONING SAVIOUR;" and again,† that

F 3

he

* Page 7.

† Page 74.

he meant "the doctrine of salvation through the expiatory death of Christ crucified."—Let us attend to the evidence in support of these confident assertions. Dr. E. is constrained to wander in the hopeless search of proof till he arrives at the 15th chapter of this epistle; and even in this chapter, surely no person whose mind was not powerfully biased by his religious system, could even dream that he discovered any doctrine in the least similar to that of the atonement. The Apostle here gives a summary of *that gospel which he had preached to them, and which they had received.* The articles of faith which he enumerates are exactly the same with those which I have represented as the common topics on which the Apostle preached. He speaks of the *death* and the *resurrection* of Christ, the day of general *resurrection* and *judgment*, and the grand *result of the Messiah's kingdom.* But we find not a syllable which a person, not initiated into the mysteries of John Calvin, could interpret as implying that the Apostle knew any such doctrine as that of the atonement.

In this short view of the Christian faith, the only circumstance upon which Dr. E. insists, is the expression of Jesus Christ dying *for* our sins. By this, we are told, is to be understood, "his dying to make an atonement for them; his dying as the great vicarious sacrifice." It is astonishing this should be asserted
with

with so little hesitation; when the preposition (*υπερ*) which is translated *for*, may with equal propriety be rendered *through*, or *on account of*, and will thus speak a language not easily to be impressed into the service of the Calvinistic scheme. But even supposing the present rendering should be retained, the passage is capable of a meaning perfectly rational. Christ died *for our sins*, inasmuch as his death was an important part of a scheme intended to produce that repentance which would deliver us from the dominion and the punishment of sin.

Hence it appears, that from the context there is no reason to conclude that the phrase *Christ crucified* was intended to convey any sentiment like that of the atonement. The other passages which Dr. E. adduces will, upon examination, be found equally destitute of proof.

I would also observe, that if the doctrine of *Christ crucified* had been the same with the modern doctrine of the *satisfaction*, the Apostle would not have represented the Christian scheme as more simple than that of the Gentiles, and have combated the prejudices they had formed against it on this account. The argumentations in defence of this notion would have been as finely spun as any of the sophisms which distinguished the Grecian schools. To give any plausibility to a doctrine so repugnant

nant as this to the natural reason of man, to his notions of justice and benevolence in God, it would have been requisite to enter into similar modes of explanation and defence with those employed by its modern advocates. But this would have been a task with which the fishermen of Galilee and their followers could not have complied. Their understandings though sound were plain; though capable of bearing a credible testimony to a matter of fact, were incapable of comprehending, much more of teaching, such metaphysical niceties as those which have been invented to give some little shew of rationality to the doctrine of the atonement.

I fully agree with Dr. E. that "the Jews could never have stumbled at Christianity, because it contained the doctrine of resurrection from the dead;" and that it would not have been folly to the Greeks, "if the gospel had really done nothing more than exhibit Jesus Christ in the character of an inspired teacher, inculcating good morals, and confirming the doctrine of a future state." The Doctor might have spared himself the trouble of those tedious pages which he has written to establish these propositions, had he previously known that, in the opinion of Unitarians, offence was taken by the Jews and Greeks, rather against the *manner* in which the doctrines were introduced, than against the *doctrines themselves*.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

*On Dr. Evans's mode of interpreting Scripture,
and on some texts which he has urged to support
the Doctrine of the Atonement.*

SO much are we biaſſed in the purſuit of truth by early habits of associating particular ideas with certain words, that whenever theſe words occur, although they may be in themſelves ambiguous, we ſhall find thoſe ideas excited with which we have been accuſtomed to connect them. Suppoſe two perſons; one to have been educated in Calviniſm, and the other in Unitarianiſm. The *former* in reading the ſcriptures finds, in almoſt every chapter, particular expreſſions which ſuggeſt to him Calviniſtic ſentiments. The *latter* diſcovers nearly in every page the notions he has been habituated to entertain. Both of them are equally confident that the ſcope and tenor of the ſcriptures are in favour of their reſpective tenets; and each in proof of his aſſertion will adduce a long liſt of paſſages, to which he has been accuſtomed to affix his particular notions. This being the caſe, with how little propriety does Dr. EVANS ſay,* “ we lay no ſtreſs at all upon
“ particular

* Page 20.

“particular expressions, independent of their general strain and connexion, and the force they may thereby acquire; but *we appeal to your feelings* with respect to the spirit of the whole taken together, and *the natural impression* made by them.”

I entirely agree with Dr. E. that in interpreting any passage of scripture, we cannot pay too much attention to the connection in which it stands. But if the sense is to be ascertained by an appeal to the *feelings*, the answers given by different persons will be as various as their habits and associations. In reading the same passage, the feelings of one man will suggest to him the doctrine of transubstantiation; those of another will be sensible of no such notion. In perusing the scriptures at large, the feelings of one will point out the simple humanity, of another the pre-existence, and of another the absolute Deity of Christ. Thus it appears that the *feelings* of men, or what they may call *the natural impressions* made upon their minds by the language of scripture, will equally prove the truth of Popery and Protestantism, of Unitarianism, Arianism and Tritheism, and every other notion which has divided the opinions of the Christian world. But what proves equally in favour of all opinions can be of no use in determining the truth of any one particular doctrine. The method therefore of ascertaining the truth which Dr. E. prescribes,

scribes, though sure to meet with advocates among the weak and enthusiastic, and to increase the popularity of him who recommends it, will be rejected by every rational investigator of the sacred writings.

If *feeling* be the test of truth, may we not be allowed to suppose, that the strength of the evidence is proportionate to the strength of the feeling? If so, since the most ignorant are usually the most confident, that is, *feel* their sentiments more powerfully than the man of a sound rational judgment, the more uninformed a person may be, the nearer he is to the truth. And it will follow, that when embarrassed by those difficulties to which we are liable in examining the scriptures, it would be our wisdom to have recourse to the most silly zealot, that his feelings may determine what we cannot discover by the aid of our rational faculties. Thus we might have reason to hope that some person might be found, whose folly and feelings would qualify him for the situation of an infallible judge in religious controversy.

But though such a compendious method of determining upon controverted subjects might be desirable to those who are unwilling to engage in the laborious pursuit of truth, I apprehend no other means have yet been discovered by which satisfaction is to be attained, than a careful and critical examination of the sacred scriptures.

scriptures. To succeed in this examination, it is necessary that we cultivate a candid and unbiassed mind, that we cherish the warmest love of truth, that we have recourse to the languages in which scriptures were originally written, that we inform ourselves concerning the habits and circumstances of the writers, that we properly distinguish between figures and realities, and that we attend to the sense of a passage rather than its sound, to the design of the argument, than to any particular phrases which may be employed.

Dr. E. has adduced a variety of passages to prove that Christ died to atone for human guilt. Many of these appear to me totally inapplicable, and it would be loss of time to comment upon them. I shall however transcribe those texts on which he seems to lay the principal stress, and endeavour to shew that they imply no such doctrine as they are employed to support.

*“ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”**

This passage in its literal meaning is a plain declaration of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that to partake

* John vi. 53.

partake of the bread and wine, thus changed into the body and blood of Christ, is absolutely necessary to salvation. But Protestants, having rejected this interpretation, adopt another at least equally absurd, and far less agreeable to the language of the text. They adduce it to prove that the death of Christ was a price paid to Deity for the sake of purchasing pardon and eternal happiness for sinners. The words, however, warrant no such mysterious meaning. In a preceding verse,* Jesus says, "I am the bread of life, he who *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he who *believeth* on me shall never thirst." By this we learn, that *to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of Christ*, is *to come to Christ*, and *to believe* in him; to acknowledge him as the Messiah, and to embrace his doctrines. Grotius's note upon this passage appears to me satisfactory. "Not only are my instructions nourishment to eternal life, but similar also will be the tendency of my death. For my death will teach the same principles which have been taught by my discourses, since it will afford a testimony to the truth of my instructions, and an example of what I have enjoined, namely, of obedience, of patience, humility, and of love."†

"I lay

* V. 35.

† Non tantum sermo meus est pabulum ad vitam æternam, sed hoc erit et mors mea. Nam idem quod sermo docet, docet
et

*"I lay down my life for the sheep."**

I am like a good shepherd, who will readily sacrifice his life in behalf of the sheep. My love to my disciples is so ardent, that I will retreat from no difficulties, not even from a painful and ignominious death, if by these means I may promote their welfare.

Dr. E. asks,† "what can we make upon the Socinian system, of that most solemn positive declaration of the Saviour himself, *no man cometh unto the Father but by me?‡*" He adds also some other passages to the same purpose; "*other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ;§ neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.||* What," saith he, "could there be in Christianity to make it an *exclusive* system, if you take out of it the doctrine of the atonement?"

To understand these passages, it is requisite to consider the state of mankind when Christ was sent to reform them.

et mors, tum sermonis veritati testimonium præbens, tum exemplum eorum quæ sermo præcipit, obedientiæ, patientiæ, humilitatis, dilectionis. Vid. Grotius in loc.

* John x. 15. † p. 14. ‡ John xiv. 6.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 11. || Acts iv. 12.

them. They were sunk into the most abject wretchedness. A lively description of their condition is given in the 2d chapter to the Romans. They had all gone out of the way. The design of Christ's mission was to restore them. For this end he was authorized to explain the attributes and government of Deity, to publish remission of sin to the penitent, to reveal by his example and instructions a perfect system of virtue, to alarm the transgressor by threatenings of future misery, and to quicken him to a life of holiness by promises of eternal joy. These were the principal heads of the Christian doctrine, and these may be said to have rendered Christianity an *exclusive* system; for whatever surmises the heathen world might have entertained respecting them, they were far from being the objects of faith. Previous to the Christian revelation mankind were deplorably ignorant of God, of his disposition to forgive, of the path of virtue, and of a future state of being. When therefore Christ said, "no man cometh to the Father but by me," and when his Apostles declared there was no other foundation of hope, they did no more than inform us that he was the instrument by which divine instruction was conveyed to us, the great pattern and teacher of virtue, and the person sent not only to declare, but also to exemplify the doctrine of life and immortality; in other words, that he was "the way, the truth, and the life."

"Feed

*"Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased
"with his own blood."**

Dr. EVANS, by urging this passage, has exhibited a clear proof that he quoted the New Testament, either from our common Greek editions, or, which is most probable, from our English version, without consulting any various readings or improved translations. Had he examined, he would have discovered, that upon the authority of the best manuscripts, and the most ancient versions, as well as the testimony of the Fathers, this passage should have been rendered "feed the church of *the Lord*, which he has purchased &c."†

That the term *purchased* gives no countenance to the Calvinistic doctrine of the satisfaction, must be evident to every novice in scriptural criticism. The words *purchased, bought, redeemed*, in the Jewish scriptures, are continually applied to the children of Israel, with a particular reference to the Egyptian and Babylonish captivities. *Thy people which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt.*‡ They are also, in allusion to the same event, termed by Moses "the people whom JEHOVAH *"hand purchased."*§ The term *Redeemer* (λύτρωτης) is applied

* Acts xx. 28. † Vid. Griesbach's Greek Testament.

‡ 2 Samuel vii. 23.

§ Exodus xv. 16.

applied to the Deity,* who was the author, and to Moses,† who was the instrument of their deliverance. But neither the Deity or Moses paid the Egyptians any price for the redemption of the Jews; when therefore the words *purchased*, &c. occur in the New Testament, we may naturally conclude that they have their usual meaning, and convey no other idea than that of *deliverance*. The words then may be thus paraphrased, “Be careful to give the best spiritual instruction to that church of Christ, which he has rescued at the expence of his life from the vassalage of sin, and translated into his own easy and delightful service.”‡

G

“ *Whom*

* Psalm lxxviii. 35.

† Acts vii. 35.

‡ I will here take the liberty to insert part of an excellent note of Wolzogenius upon Matthew xx. 28. Sciendum est vocem *λυτρον* seu redemptionis pretium non habere vim amplius significandi quam alibi vox *redemptionis*, quæ nobis per Christi contigit mortem, ut cum Paulus ait, Romans iii. 24, “nos justificatos esse per redemptionem &c.” Idem prorsus valet ut dixisset nos justificatos esse per *pretium redemptionis* quæ est in Christo Jesu. Sic etiam, Col. i. 14. Eph. i. 7. Vox enim *απολυτρωσις* significat propriè solutionem certi pretii pro captivo, & ab eo qui illum captivum detinet liberationem. Sumitur autem hæc vox non tantum apud profanos scriptores sed etiam in tota scriptura, non solum crebrò, sed (præter unum fortè aut alterum locum) semper metaphoricè pro quavis liberatione.

*"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through
"faith in his blood."**

Dr. EVANS has cited this passage repeatedly as it is erroneously translated in the common English version.

The

liberatione. Deut. vii. 8, dicitur Deum Israelem redimisse, *i. e.* liberâsse e domo servitutis & e manu Pharaonis; non quod Deus Pharaoni aliquod pretium pro Israele solverit, sed quod eum simpliciter e servitute ejus liberârit. Vid. Deut. ix. 26. xxi. 28. xiii. 5. 2 Sam. vii. 23. Neh. i. 10. Psalm xxxi. 6. lxxvii. 16. Isai. lxxxix. 22. Hinc Stephanus Mosem vocat *redemptorem*, Act. vii. 35, per quem Deus hanc liberationem procuravit etsi nullum pretium Moses pro populo Dei dederit. Sed et alia in Scriptis N. T. plurima loca reperiuntur in quibus vox *redemptionis* ita metaphoricè & absque respectu ullius veri pretii usurpatur. Luc. i. 68. Tit. ii. 14. 1 Pet. i. 18. Gal. iii. 13. Luc. ii. 38. xxi. 28. Rom. viii. 23. Eph. i. 30. Heb. xi. 35.—Jam vero causa nulla est cum vox *redemptionis* fermè semper in sacris literis metaphoricè accipiat pro quavis liberatione, cur non etiam vox λύσις hoc loco in eadem metaphorica significatione accipi debeat. Λύσις propriè ei datur a quo captivus redimitur; ii autem a quibus nos captivi detinebamur sunt Diabolus, peccatum, mundus & mors, quorum nulli Christus ullum λύσις dedit vel pretium persolvit. Quod autem vulgo asseritur Christum nos ab Ira Dei redimisse, id demonstrari nequit. Deus enim non fuit nobis iratus neque infensus, sed ex mera dilectione erga nos redemptionem hanc per sanguinem Christi procuraverit. John iii. 16. Rom. v. 8.

* Rom. iii. 25.

The word (*ἱλαστηριον*) which is here translated *propitiation*, should have been rendered *mercy-seat*. The words also (*διὰ πίστεως*) *through faith*, are most probably interpolated, not being to be found in the most respectable Greek manuscripts. The verse will then run thus :
 “whom God hath set forth to be a mercy-seat in his own
 “blood, to declare his justification &c.” (See p. 22.)

I cannot avoid observing here, that it would save very considerable trouble in religious controversy, if the combatants had sufficient ingenuoufness to reject those translations which have been proved to be erroneous, and to rectify those passages which have been evidently interpolated.

“*Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again
 “for our justification.*”*

Jesus Christ was delivered to death, not on account of his own, but on account of our transgressions. To save us from the dominion and the punishment of these, was the great object of his sufferings; and he was raised again from the dead, to reveal to us that resurrection to future happiness which is the consequence of justification. This is agreeable to what the same

G 2

Apostle

* Rom. iv. 26.

Apostle declares, " if Christ be not raised, your faith is
" vain, ye are yet in your sins."

Grotius's note upon the passage, though it contains an interpretation somewhat different from the former, well deserves our attention. " The Apostle might
" have said, (remarks this great critic) Who both died
" and rose again, that he might justify, *i. e.* that he might
" deliver us from our sins; but being fond of an anti-
" thesis, he joined *sins*, which are the death of the mind,
" to the death of Christ; and the *acquisition of righte-*
" *ousness*, (*adeptionem justitiæ*) which is the resurrection
" of the mind, he connected with the resurrection of
" Christ."

" *This is my body which is broken for you:**—*This is*
" *my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many,*
" *for the remission of sins.*"†

Upon these passages Dr. EVANS exclaims,† " How
" very express and determinate are the words he makes
" use of! Would any of those who reject the doctrine
" of the atonement express themselves in such terms as
" these; or if they did, could they expect any thing but
" to be misunderstood?" That the words of Christ
are *express and determinate*, is granted, unless by these
terms

* 1 Cor. xi. 24.

† Matt. xxvi. 28.

‡ p. 14.

terms it be intended to assert that they are not figurative: that they are not figurative cannot be allowed, because this would be an avowal of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Protestants, however, are all agreed that Christ intended that the *bread* should be emblematical of his body, and the *wine* of his blood. They also agree that the body of Christ was *broken for us*, and that the blood of Christ was *shed for the remission of sins*. "Those who reject the doctrine of the atonement," when they partake of the Lord's supper, constantly use this language; they apprehend it conveys their sentiments beautifully and concisely, and they have not the least fear of being "misunderstood." These words therefore being equally used and approved by all parties of Christians, whether believers in the atonement or not, with what propriety are they urged in proof of this doctrine, without a single remark designed to shew that the atonement is either implied or declared by them? The passages may be paraphrased in the following manner: "This bread now broken before you is a representation of my body, which shall soon be torn and mangled on your account; and this cup is designed to signify my blood, which will soon be shed as a ratification of that covenant* which God has made with all mankind."

* Our Saviour here has probably an allusion to Exodus xxiv. 8. When Moses, commissioned by Deity, had made a covenant

*" He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."**

Though Christ was a pure and perfect being, uncontaminated with the vices which usually disgrace our nature, yet he suffered as though he had been a transgressor, that he might be the means of recovering us to righteousness and the divine favour.

" He hath appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself."†

The Jewish High Priest went every year, on the great day of expiation, into the most holy place, to make atonement,† by the blood of the victims prescribed

covenant with the people of Israel, and sprinkled them with the blood of the victim, he said, " Behold, this is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you." Vid. Wolzogenius in loc.

* 1 Cor. v. 21.

† Heb. ix. 26.

‡ By *making atonement*, under the Jewish law, is not meant removing the guilt, and consequently the punishment of sin; it refers only to some ritual observances appointed by divine wisdom in that infant period of the world, for the purpose of removing ceremonial impurity. Thus Exod, xxix, 37, atonement

scribed in the Mosaic law; but Jesus Christ hath appeared once, and offered himself, by submitting to death for the purpose of bringing mankind to repentance and pardon.

*"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."**

The epistle whence these words are cited, addressed to the Jews who were strangers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,

ment is directed to be made seven days for the *altar*. Levit. xiv. 53, it is commanded that atonement be made for the *house* in which the leprosy had been. Levit. xvi. 16. The blood of a goat was to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, to make atonement for the *holy place*.

* 1 Peter ii. 24. This passage is confidently brought forward, without a single attempt to invalidate any different explanations, as a proof of the atonement, in a late curious publication, with a very curious title, *Scriptural Revision of Socinian Arguments*, by the Rev. F. Randolph, M. A. Should this writer deign to read these pages which I have presumed to offer to the public, I trust he will be candid enough to acknowledge that the sermons by the late Cabel Evans, (which he now represents as "well deserving a perusal") are a very insufficient reply to the arguments brought forward by Dr. Priestley against the atonement. I forbear to enter largely into the merits of Mr. Randolph's production, yet I must take

Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, was written by the apostle Peter, to whom was committed "the gospel of the circumcision." From these circumstances we may expect to find frequent references to the Jewish system. In this passage the writer evidently refers to the *scape-goat*, who was said to *bear away* the sins of the

take leave to say, that probably no very erroneous idea would be given of it, if that language was applied to it which Moses used concerning the Chaos, "*it was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.*" But I would not willingly be accused of affronting "the *weakness* of religious error." A full and just account of this work, it is expected, will be presented soon to the world, by a gentleman, eminently well qualified to appreciate its value. Mr. Randolph must allow me to take notice of the very rash manner in which he has attacked my much-valued friend *the Welch Freeholder*, a disciplined controversialist, who, with his rare powers of understanding, and his happy talent for ridicule, is not to be provoked with impunity.

Quo moriture ruis? Majoraque viribus audes?

Fallit te incautum pietas.

The Reviser of Socinian Arguments appears much offended with the Welch Freeholder, for representing some modern believers, as *advocates for absurd creeds*, as *degrading the Deity*, and *charging the oracles of God with their own absurd conceits*. If such imputations as these were made upon persons who, after fair examination, profess to believe what their interest would tempt them to deny, then the Welch Freeholder, perhaps

the people into the wilderness. This allusion the Jews, to whom he wrote, would immediately perceive. Being convinced, from the declarations of their prophets, that the scape-goat was unable to remove their guilt, and well knowing, in conformity with the general practice of their country to represent moral ideas by symbols, that the flight of the scape-goat into the wilderness was only a symbolical representation of their duty to separate themselves from their vices, as well as to confess them, they could be in no danger of supposing the Apostle intended to inform them, that their sins and the guilt of them were all *transferred* to Christ. We are not justified therefore in supposing that this passage means more, than that the death and sufferings of Christ were part
of

haps with some justice, might have been convicted of offending against "humility and decency;" but if these reflexions were designed for an order of men, who, by frequent subscription and flattering hopes of preferment, are trained from early life to the profession of opinions which they are interested to maintain, then I see not how this instructive writer is chargeable with "changing rational enquiry into the insolence of "invective, and degrading the authority of talents into the "illiberality of prejudice and passion." I would beg leave to recommend this enquiry to the Reviser, whether it be consistent with "humility and decency," to cast these censures upon the Welch Freeholder, in a book, in which one of the most justly revered characters of the age is wantonly charged with *disingenuousness*, with *quibbling*, and *evasion*.

of a scheme, by which motives sufficiently powerful were supplied to bear away our sins, and induce us to engage in the practice of universal holiness.

*“ Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.”**

The just and holy Jesus passed through a scene of painful persecution, and at length endured a lingering and ignominious death, for the sake of completing a system of influential motives, by which sinners were to be restored to virtue and the favour of God.

“ And sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.”†

These are the principal detached passages of scripture urged by Dr. EVANS in defence of the doctrine of atonement. Although it has now been seen that this unaccountable notion cannot be deduced from them, yet I have no doubt that they constantly suggested it to his mind, owing to his practice of appealing to his *feelings*, (which would always correspond with his early prejudices) rather than consulting his judgment, and of attending to what he calls *the natural impression made by these texts*, rather than subjecting them to a critical examination.

Before

* 1 Peter iii. 18.

† See above, p. 37.

Before I conclude this chapter, I shall take notice of an attack made by our author upon Dr. Priestley, for asserting,* that “admitting the popular doctrine of the atonement, the whole of the Old Testament is, throughout, a most unaccountable book, and the religion it exhibits is defective in the most essential article. Also the Jews in our Saviour’s time had certainly no idea of this doctrine. If they had they would have expected a suffering, and not a triumphant Messiah.”

In reply to this, our author says,† “May not the doctrine of the atonement be very true, an essential article of Christianity, though it should not appear to have been taught in the Old Testament so clearly as it is in the New; nay, even though it should not appear to have been taught there at all?”

A doctrine, it is granted may be true and important, and yet may not appear to have been taught in the Old Testament; because the Mosaic dispensation was not intended to give mankind information so perfect as they should afterwards receive. The Deity was pleased that our species should not at once arrive to that perfection

* History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. i. p. 158.

† P. 91.

fection for which it was designed; and to this season of its infancy the system of Moses was well adapted. But though the information was imperfect, it was not untrue; though it did not teach the truth in its full extent, it taught nothing contradictory to it; for if this were the case the character of the God of truth must be impeached. It could not therefore have been taught that penitence and reformation should be the means of recommending mankind to God, if in reality they were to be accepted by Deity on account of the merit of another being, instead of their own good dispositions and conduct. If then the doctrine of the atonement be true, and the only ground of acceptance with God, the Old Testament, which taught that penitence and reformation were the grounds of acceptance, must have been "an unaccountable book, the religion it exhibited " would have been defective in the most essential " article," and it would have held forth delusive hopes to mankind.

Dr. EVANS attempts to retort the difficulty upon Dr. Priestley, by supposing, that if the Old Testament be liable to any imputations for concealing the doctrine of the atonement, a similar charge must be brought against it for not revealing the doctrine of the resurrection. But it may be replied, if the resurrection was not taught in the Old Testament, in this case its information

mation would have been only *imperfect*, whereas in the other case its instructions would have been *false*, inasmuch as it would have given men improper notions of the means of gaining the favour of God. The divine conduct in the former would have been that of a wise parent, who suited his instructions to the years and capacities of his children; whereas in the latter it would have been similar to that of a wicked parent, who took delight in imposing on his offspring. The cases therefore are not similar, and we cannot argue from one to the other. Consequently the assertion of Dr. Priestley is as yet unshaken, that, upon the supposition that the atonement is true, and not revealed in the Old Testament, the Old Testament is a most unaccountable book.

Farther; Dr. Priestley asserts, that "the Jews in our Saviour's time had no idea of the doctrine." Upon which our author asks, "May it not be very clearly taught in the Old Testament, notwithstanding the Jews in general in our Saviour's time did not understand it?" It is true the doctrine may have been clearly revealed, though the Jews *in general* did not understand it. But this is not the question. The proper question is, Could the doctrine be taught clearly in the Old Testament, though the Jews in our Saviour's time *had no idea of it*? I hesitate not to reply, that this ignorance would be highly improbable. For if there
were

were among the Jews, at this time, persons who were actually interested in the divine favour, they must, upon the Calvinistic scheme, have had some notions of the way of salvation. But that there were such persons is evident from various passages in the New Testament. The writer to the Hebrews* informs us of several who, some time before the coming of Christ, "obtained a good report through faith." We are told† that Simeon "was a just and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel." And we are informed,‡ that "there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews devout men out of every nation under heaven." We cannot therefore, upon the presumption of the truth of the atonement, and the importance of a belief in it, maintain that the Jews at the time of Christ had no idea of it. Now if there were persons who believed the doctrine, they must have received it originally either from their scriptures, or in some preternatural manner; if from their scriptures, then it appears they were acquainted with the passages in which it was taught; and if in a preternatural manner, then they would have found no greater difficulty in understanding those passages of the prophets, in which it is said to be contained, than persons of similar opinions in the present day. I repeat it then, that it is highly improbable, if
the

* Heb. xi. 39. † Luke ii. 25. Acts ii. 5.

the doctrine of the atonement be true, that the Jews should be ignorant of it, and consequently of the character of Christ as "a suffering and not a triumphant Messiah."

Our author however maintains, that whatever sentiments the Jews themselves might have entertained upon the subject, the doctrine "was set before them clearly in the writings of many of their prophets, and held up daily to their view in those various sacrifices which made so distinguished a figure in their appointed ritual of worship."*

In proof of this he informs us, that "the prophet Isaiah describes † Christ as despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; he represents him as a lamb brought to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before his shearers not opening his mouth; he speaks of him as cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of his people, bearing their iniquities, pouring out his soul unto death, making it an offering for sin, being numbered with transgressors, bearing their sins, and making intercession for them. Does not Daniel speak of him
"as

* P. 94.

† Chap. liii.

“as cut off, but not for himself, finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness?” The Doctor adds, “What can be more evident than that the Old Testament scriptures we have just recited, predict not only a suffering, but an atoning Saviour?”*

That they predict a suffering Saviour, no one will deny; but that they give any reason to expect an *atoning* Saviour, it requires more than common ingenuity to discover, even in our common very erroneous translation of the chapter. “He was stricken for the transgressions of his people,” inasmuch as he suffered to deliver mankind from the evil influence and the consequences of sin. He made “an offering for sin,” as he willingly surrendered himself on our account, with the most meritorious cheerfulness, to the death of the cross. What we are to understand by his “being numbered with transgressors,” we are informed by the Evangelist Mark; “and with him they crucify two thieves, and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, and he was numbered with the transgressors.”† When he is represented as “bearing the sins” of men, nothing more can be meant than his removing them by means of his religion; this we learn from the Evangelist

* P. 95.

† Mark xv. 28.

Evangelist Matthew. When Christ healed the sick, the historian informs us this was done, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."* Surely he did not heal the diseases of men, by transferring the diseases to himself, but by employing those means with which God was pleased to endow him for the purpose of removing them. By his "making intercession for the transgressors," we may understand, the many ardent supplications he poured out at the footstool of his God and Father, in behalf of sinners; and it is most reasonable to suppose, since the Prophet is here very minute in mentioning the several circumstances which should attend the last sufferings of Christ, that a reference is made to that memorable prayer which he uttered on the cross, with his dying breath, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

The prophecy of Daniel also teaches no such notion as that of an atonement. The religion of the Messiah is said "to finish," or rather "to *restrain* transgression," as it was designed to weaken its influence—"to make an end of sin," as it was calculated at length to extirpate moral evil from the world—"to bring in
H "everlasting

* Matt. viii. 17.

“everlasting righteousness,” as it would introduce those principles of virtue, which at length would prevail universally, and change these scenes of vice into the happy abodes of paradisaical purity. That “the Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself,” seems only to intend that he should suffer, not on account of his own transgressions, but on account of the sins of those, whose interests he should undertake to serve.

Thus I have endeavoured to prove that the prophets do not teach the doctrine of the atonement. That it was not held up to the view of the Jews by the sacrifices appointed in their ritual, must be reserved for a separate chapter.



C H A P. III.

On the Argument in favour of the Atonement derived from the history of Christ's sufferings.

“ **T**HROUGH the whole scene of the Saviour’s sufferings, (saith our author*) we behold nothing but what is inexpressibly awful, and which serves almost irresistibly to impress us with an idea of the immensity, if I may so speak, of his sufferings. Hear him crying out in the garden, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; see him sore amazed and very heavy; view him in his agony, blood pressing through his pores upon the ground, whilst he earnestly prays, Father, save me from this hour! Though at the same time he acknowledges that for this cause he came to this hour. Now he utters these importunate expressions: ‘ If it be possible let this cup pass from me;’ and then, when he had scarcely uttered them, he recalls them, saying, ‘ The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall

H 2

“ I not

“ I not drink it ? ” And when expiring on the cross we
 “ hear the most mysterious complaint of all, ‘ My
 “ God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

The agony of mind which our Lord endured in the garden, on the night previous to his crucifixion, has given occasion to the charge of pusillanimity from the unbeliever, and has furnished an argument for the advocates of the atonement ; but I apprehend, on an accurate examination of the subject, no just reason will be found for charging Jesus with timidity, or for supposing that his distress proceeded from supernatural causes.

When, on account of this distress, it is said that Socrates, or any one other martyr, discovered less timidity than Jesus at the approach of death, it deserves to be considered, that it has been customary with those who have recorded the histories of great characters, to throw a veil over any little weaknesses they discovered when in the society of their nearest friends. This is not the case with the biographers of Christ. They exhibit, with equal simplicity, the darkest scenes of his humiliation, and the brightest proofs of his divine commission. They relate the transactions in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, with the same artless fidelity, with which they record his
 miraculous

miraculous exertions on the lake of Gennesareth, when the winds and the waves obeyed him.

Besides, true courage does not consist in divesting ourselves of our natural desire to avoid suffering, but in standing firm and unshaken when duty calls upon us to engage. Some probably might have applauded the heroism of Jesus, if he had conducted himself in a similar manner with his disciple Peter, who avowed himself ready to follow his master to prison and to death. But let us observe the difference in the behaviour of them both in the hour of conflict. The disciple with oaths denied his knowledge of Jesus; the master with composure resigned himself to his enemies. Perhaps it may be found rather generally the case, that the person who, on the approach of suffering, is solicitous to try the strength of his principles, by endeavouring to anticipate what he shall soon be called to endure, will be more likely to conduct himself with becoming fortitude, than the person who relies for support in the hour of trial upon the continuance of that enthusiastic ardour he at present feels. In the histories of the Christian martyrs many instances occur, in which the man who had viewed his danger at a distance with every appearance of heroism, has given at the time of suffering evident proofs of weakness; whilst he who at first seemed to distrust his strength, and whose sensibility as

it were shrunk from the conflict, has conducted himself at last with firmness and intrepidity. These remarks appear to me to prove, that the imputation of cowardice cannot with justice be fixed upon the character of Christ.

To account for the agony of mind he discovered, without having recourse to any *mysterious* causes, it should be remembered that his mind was possessed of uncommon *sensibility*. Proofs of this appeared when he wept at the tomb of Lazarus, and over the city of Jerusalem, whose inhabitants were soon to destroy him. This sensibility might be in a great measure constitutional, but principally derived from his fatigues and fastings, from the sorrows with which he was acquainted, and the griefs with which he was oppressed. To estimate the degree of fortitude under affliction, we are to consider the sensibility of the sufferer as well as the magnitude of the suffering; for some persons, merely from a happy mechanism of constitution, are able to sustain unmoved, what would urge others to the very borders of distraction. True heroism in such characters as these discovers itself, when their good principles, such as a wish to serve the cause of truth, to promote the welfare of mankind, or to submit patiently to the will of heaven, overcome the influence of their sensibility, and enable them to pass with honour through the scenes which they so much dreaded.

Quanto

Quantò crux magis doluerit, tanto præstantior est patientia.

Such was the heroism of Christ. The black and threatening prospect at first appalled his heart; he was sorrowful and very heavy; "Father," said he, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" He retracted however the petition; "nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!"

That we may form a just estimate of our Saviour's fortitude on this trying occasion, it ought principally to be considered, that the perfect *fore-knowledge* communicated to him of every part of his approaching sufferings distinguished him from all other martyrs. It is commonly the case with martyrs, that they may to the very last indulge some hope that their persecutors will relent; or that some means or other may be afforded to escape the impending storm. They have also but one general indistinct idea of what they have to encounter. This was not the case with Jesus. He was apprized of the event, and knew that to escape it was impossible. He had a distinct foretaste of every drop of the bitter cup; his imagination ran over every step of the melancholy scene. He foresaw the treachery of one of those twelve persons whom he had chosen to be his attendants, the unfaithfulness of one of those disciples who were then with him, and whom he had indulged with marks of peculiar friendship. The society of friends in the
crisis

crisis of danger is of sovereign efficacy to the sinking heart; but he foreknew that all his disciples would desert and abandon him to his enemies; that he should be seized by a lawless crowd; that he should be insulted by his judges, and mocked and scourged by his persecutors; and that to conclude the tragical scene, he should be suspended on a cross, between two thieves, to terminate his existence in the most excruciating agonies. When all these circumstances are considered, I apprehend it will appear, that our author was not justified in concluding, from the distress of Christ in the garden, that he felt any pains, but such as are to be explained upon natural principles. We shall also perceive the rashness of *Calvin*, if his notion of Christ's suffering were not true, in charging him with a cowardly and effeminate mind, *pufillo et muliebri animo*.

Our author terms the language of Christ when on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* "a mysterious complaint." With what justice it is called *mysterious* it is not easy to perceive; for in the Hebrew way of speaking, as Dr. Whitby observes, God is said to leave or forsake any person, when he suffers him to fall into great calamity, and lie under great misery, and does not help him out of them. *Isaiah* xlix. 14. "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But I am
more

more disposed to agreed with Bishop Pearce, that “ these words most probably were not uttered by way “ of complaint, but by way of pointing out the 22d “ Psalm, which begins with these words, as prophetical “ of Jesus the speaker.” With this interpretation of our Saviour’s exclamation, which Dr. E. very well knew, with what propriety could he censure it as an “ unqualified assertion” in Dr. Priestley, that “ Jesus “ Christ went through the scene of his trial and cruci- “ fixion without the least appearance of any thing like “ agony of mind?” From this concluding part of his life, not a single instance can be given, in which he betrayed the least defect of patience, fortitude, or confidence in God.



C H A P. IV.

*On the argument in favour of the Atonement from
the sacrifices practised by Heathens and Jews.*

“WHAT doctrine” (saith our author*) “more
“ ancient than that of sacrifices? And what
“ doctrine has been more universally prevalent? It must
“ have originated in a divine command.”

The doctrine of sacrifices is allowed to have been of
the most remote antiquity, and very generally, though
not *universally* practised in the world. Of these facts
we have the most satisfactory evidence. But to say in
this peremptory manner, that the practice *must* have
been of divine origin, is to be wise above what is written
either in sacred or profane history, and to assert what is
not very honourable to the divine character. Surely
it does not raise our ideas of the Supreme Being, to
imagine he should interpose in a preternatural manner,
to direct mankind to murder their sheep and bullocks,
as the most effectual means of “APPEASING AN
“ ANGRY

* P. 146.

“ANGRY DEITY.” Would it not become us, rather than maintain such an hypothesis, to confess our total ignorance of the cause of this prevalent custom?

But I apprehend a very probable account may be given of the origin of sacrifices, without having recourse to the particular interference of Deity. Ancient histories, both sacred and profane, inform us, that it has been a practice of remote antiquity, and of universal prevalence in the Eastern world, when any person approached a superior to express his obligations, or to obtain a favour, that he took with him some valuable part of his property as a present. The custom is still observed in Eastern countries. In the infancy of the world, men having little knowledge beyond the plains or the mountains which gave them birth, would form ideas to us almost inconceivably contracted of the extent of the universe; and if they entertained any notions of a First Cause, they would scarcely think of him, as very far superior in power and wisdom to the most exalted of their fellow-creatures. It would be natural therefore, when they sought any favour from him, or returned him thanks for what they had received, to approach him in a manner similar to that in which they approached their earthly superiors. They would probably bring bullocks out of their houses, or he-goats out of their folds. What gave rise to the *burning* of the animals presented

presented to Deity, perhaps it may not be so easy to determine. Probably the true source may have been that mentioned by a very ingenious writer.* “It
 “being observed that many things were consumed by
 “the heat of the *sun*, which was considered as the great
 “agent of the Deity in the whole system of nature, and
 “that other things were burnt up by *lightning*, which
 “they imagined to be the immediate act of God, men
 “might naturally enough conceive, that the destruction
 “of things by fire was the manner in which God took
 “them; and hence might arise the custom of solemnly
 “burning whatever they meant to give to God. They
 “would be confirmed in this opinion and practice by
 “observing that the smoke of things consumed by fire
 “went upwards, where God was supposed to reside,
 “and that after burning, very little, and in some cases,
 “nothing sensible was left behind.” This, I may add,
 seems to be the only possible method, according to their
 ideas, in which the victim could be properly offered to
 Deity. Had it not been slain, but devoted to God,
 and suffered still to remain among their flocks and
 herds, it would have been only nominally his property.
 Had it been driven abroad, either into the woods, or
 the desert, some stranger might have seized it as his
 own. Had it been merely slain, it would not only
 soon

* Theological Repository, vol. i. p. 198.

soon have become offensive, but have been food to birds and beasts of prey. The only method, therefore, by which it could be offered without these inconveniences, would be to consume it with fire, and cause it to arise in smoke to the residence of their Deity. That men early entertained the notion, that the odour of the victims would be acceptable to God, is evident from the account of Noah's burnt-offerings after coming out of the ark; "the Lord smelled a sweet favour."* The same idea is conveyed in the Old Testament in numberless passages. And in allusion to it Paul says, "we are unto God a sweet favour;"† and "Christ hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling favour."‡ The same notion which seems to have given birth to the practice of burning the sacrifices, is to be seen among the Papists, when they burn incense, and strive to cause its smoke to ascend towards heaven.

This surely is a more rational mode of solving the phenomenon of sacrifices, than to have recourse to a divine interposition, which is the common resort of ignorance, credulity, and superstition, and which should never be admitted but where the evidence is irresistible, and where some very valuable object is to be secured.

Sacrifices,

* Genesis viii. 21. † 2 Cor. ii. 15. ‡ Eph. v. 2.

Sacrifices, being generally employed in the world, gained an introduction into the Mosaic law. The Jewish dispensation was in many respects an imperfect institution, containing merely the *elements** of moral instruction, and was most probably designed principally to keep alive in the world the knowledge of the divine unity; if so, it might not have coincided with the intentions of this dispensation, to abolish the use of sacrifices, so universally practised by surrounding nations, but to regulate the practice of them, so as to discountenance those which were really cruel and injurious to society, and to retain those only, which, in that state of the world, might be employed to testify the sincerity and other good dispositions of the offerer.

Dr. EVANS not only supposes sacrifices among the heathens and Jews "to have originated in a divine command," but also "that command to have been given in reference to the mode which infinite wisdom had ordained for the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of Christ."† If sacrifices had been instituted originally by divine command, and this command had been given in reference to the sacrifice of Christ, should we not

* Gal. iv. 3, 9. τα ασθενη και ὀλιγα σοιχεία.

† Vid. p. 147.

not have reason to believe, that mankind would have been made acquainted with this reference, and that some traces of it would have been discovered in ancient histories either sacred or profane? And would it not have been especially natural to expect, that the reason, and efficacy, and end of sacrifices would have been pointed out with accuracy by Moses in his law? Yet no intimation of this nature is given by a single passage in any antient writer either Heathen or Jewish. Neither Pagans, or Hebrews, seem to have employed their sacrifices with a view to the *great sacrifice*, to which, according to modern divines, all antient sacrifices had a reference; nor is there a single instance in which the prophets have accused the Jews, whom they instructed, with forgetfulness on this important subject. May we not therefore fairly conclude that such an idea was never entertained? And may we not rationally believe, that the notion that sacrifices were instituted to typify the death of Christ, derived its existence from a misinterpretation of the New Testament writers; who, being Jews, would use a language concerning the death and sufferings of Christ, in a considerable degree tinged with those usages with which they had been conversant.

CHAP.

C H A P. V.

*On the Argument in Defence of the Atonement
from the Dignity of Christ's person.*

“IT is this doctrine alone” (viz. that of the atonement, says Dr. E.*) “which enables us fairly to account for so much being said in the Scriptures upon the subject of the dignity, the original, eternal, unchangeable, divine dignity of the Redeemer’s person. Blot out the doctrine of the atonement, and what occasion have we for a REDEEMING GOD?” If this dignity be actually ascribed to Christ in the Scriptures, I cannot see how it follows that the doctrine of the atonement must be true. It may be allowed to be possible, that Christ should have been a great, superangelic, pre-existent Being, who became a man, and who died on the cross on account of the human race, without acknowledging that he died as an atoning sacrifice, to appease the wrath of heaven. The latter is by no means a necessary consequence of the former. It is as unreasonable

* P. 17.

unreasonable to maintain that Christ made an atonement for sin, because he was God, as it would be to affirm that he rose from the dead, because he actually died. That Christ died is implied in the assertion that he rose from the dead, and the deity of Christ is implied in the Calvinistic notion of the atonement; but each of these respective ideas must be established by its own proper, independent evidence. Dr. E. also declares* that "the deity of Christ, and the atonement of Christ, must stand or fall together." The atonement, according to the Calvinistic idea of its being an *infinite* satisfaction to divine justice, must fall, if the doctrine of the deity of Christ be removed; but this will not be the case with the deity of Christ, if the doctrine of atonement be removed. Therefore, though it be granted that our author has actually established the truth of Christ's deity, he has only established a proposition previously necessary to the proper proof of the atonement, but it does not follow that he has proved the truth of the atonement itself.

To disprove, however, the divine dignity of Christ, a doctrine upon which the Calvinistic notion of the atonement rests, I shall attempt to shew, that Dr. E. has not brought sufficient evidence to convince us that

I

Jesus

* P. 42.

Jesus Christ was represented, by himself or by his Apostles, as any thing more than a pure and benevolent being of the human race, authorized from God by preternatural powers to answer the purpose of his divine mission.

S E C T. I.

On the Pre-existence of Christ.

THE following is the first passage adduced by our author in defence of Christ's pre-existence; "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore &c.*"*

It is rather unaccountable that Dr. EVANS should have quoted this passage from our very imperfect version. Did he not know that the text has been much more

* Philip. ii, 5, &c.

more correctly translated? Or was he unwilling to shake the steady faith of his congregation,* by informing them that the words were capable of an interpretation less favourable to the pre-existence or deity of Christ?

The Apostle here is advising the Philippians to brotherly affection, and, however distinguished any of them might be by miraculous powers, to attend with condescension to the welfare even of the meanest among their fellow men. He illustrates this disposition and practice by the example of Christ: "For the same
 "mind ought to be in you, which was also in Christ
 "Jesus, who being in the form of God, held not the
 "being like unto God a spoil, or prize; but emptied
 "himself, taking the form of a servant, being in the
 "likeness of common mortals. And appearing only
 "as an ordinary mortal, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the
 "cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him,
 "and of his great favour hath bestowed upon him a
 "name which is above every name, that to the name
 "of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,
 "and things on earth, and things under the earth,

I 2

" and

* Many Christians are of the same sentiments with Montaigne, that "ignorance is the softest pillow upon which a man can lay his head."

“and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ
“is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Our author has given us a proof, equivalent to that of a formal confession, that he could not imagine that the doctrine of Christ's equality to his Father was suggested by this passage; since we find it placed by the Doctor in a list of passages urged merely in defence of Christ's pre-existence. Thus it appears that Dr. EVANS was candid enough *virtually* to acknowledge the insufficiency of a text, which is commonly, though absurdly,† urged in support

* This version is given by the excellent Mr. Lindsey, and seems to me perfectly conformable to the language and spirit of the original. See “Second Address to the Students of
“Oxford and Cambridge.”

† I say “*absurdly* urged,” because the *form* of God must be something different from God himself, and the word *μορφή*, *form*, signifies something which is an object of our senses, and therefore cannot mean the divine essence, which is invisible; because (v. 9.) God is said to have exalted him, that is, upon the Trinitarian scheme, to have exalted God; and to have exalted him more highly than he was before, (*υπερυψωσε*) that is, to have raised the eternally perfect, and immutable God to a degree of glory and happiness which he never previously enjoyed. When will Trinitarians open their eyes to these absurdities? When will they indignantly reject these paradoxes, by which their Christian profession is held forth to ridicule?

support of the Trinitarian herefy, a text of which Calvin in his zeal declared not all the devils could deprive him. "Mihi certè ne omnes quidem Diaboli
"hunc locum extorqueant."

That *the form of God*, here spoken of, refers to the miraculous powers, which Christ exerted during his ministry, and not to any supposed dignity previous to his birth, is evident from a variety of passages. The glory which Christ possessed the Evangelist John informs us he beheld, "the glory as of an only begotten
"of the Father." Peter declares that he, and some of his brethren the Apostles, were eye-witnesses of Christ's majesty, when he received honour and glory from God by a voice from heaven, saying, "This is
"my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Christ also speaks of himself, as displaying so much of the divine power, in the mighty works which God was pleased to perform through him, that he could say, "he who hath seen me, hath seen the Father." This kind of language is not applied peculiarly to Christ: Moses, on account of the miracles he performed, is said to have been *a God* unto Pharaoh; and even Simon Magus, on account of his wonderful impostures, which were deemed by the Samaritans miraculous exertions, was denominated *the great power of God*. Hence it appears, that in the plenitude of miraculous powers,

which the Father was pleased should dwell in Christ, during the period of his ministry, consisted that "ray" of the Father's glory, and resemblance of his person," spoken of by the writer to the Hebrews, and that "image," that "*form of God*," mentioned by the Apostle Paul.

The example of humility then held forth to these Philippian converts, who were too often disposed to be vain of the miraculous powers God was pleased to bestow upon them, was that of *Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God*, endowed with powers by which he was enabled to hush the storm, and calm the ocean, to heal the sick, and raise the dead, *held not the being like unto God a spoil or prize*;* did not vaunt himself in the miraculous energies he possessed, or seek to be permitted to

* Ουχ' ἀρπαγμον ηγήσατο το εἶναι ἰσα Θεῷ. The phrase *οὐχ' ἀρπαγμον ηγήσατο* is not in any other place to be met with either in sacred or profane authors. But a similar phrase, very explanatory of this, is referred to by Grotius, and quoted by Whitby from Heliodorus. "A young man in the flower of his age thrusts from him a woman like himself, *καὶ οὐχ' ἀρπαγμα, εἰδ' ἐξαιῖον ηγεῖσθαι το πρᾶγμα*; he does not look upon this as a great offer, a thing very desirable." Vid. Whitby in Loc. *Εἶναι ἰσα Θεῷ, to be like unto God*. *Ἰσα* signifies *resemblance*, not equality, as may be seen from a variety of passages. Job v. 14. x. 10; &c. &c.

to employ them for the sake of commanding the reverence of mankind; *but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of common mortals; readily consented to lay aside the exercise of these divine powers at the pleasure of him who gave them, and to wear the appearance of a servant or a slave, of one of the lowest among mankind. And appearing only as an ordinary mortal,* he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.* His humility did not only consist in appearing as one who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, notwithstanding he was so highly distinguished by God; but it extended farther; he cheerfully resigned himself, weak and unprotected, to those who came to apprehend him, not praying to be permitted to work a miracle in his defence; and suffered without a murmur a painful and ignominious death.

The next passage produced by our author in proof of the pre-existence of Christ is the following:

“ γε

* *Ἀνθρώπος* signifies a man who is not distinguished from the rest of his species by any extraordinary powers. Thus, Judges xvi. 7, Sampson says, “ if they bind me with seven green withs, then shall I be weak as another man,” *ὡς εἰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων.*

*"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."**

Men who are zealous in the defence of any particular system of faith will fancy arguments in its support, in passages of scripture, by which no such ideas would be suggested to an unprejudiced reader. This is remarkably evident in the use that has been made of this text by the advocates of Christ's pre-existence. The Apostle, in this chapter, is exhorting the Corinthians to complete their contributions, towards the relief of the poor and persecuted Christians. He tells them† they abounded, *i. e.* were rich in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in love to the ministers of Christ; and he exhorts them to abound in liberality also. "For ye know the kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." His meaning seems to be this; "Ye are rich in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, and in the many miraculous gifts conferred upon you; be not above attending to a virtue, the exercise of which, though not so splendid as that of your divine powers, is an important part of your Christian

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Ver. 7.

“ Christian duty. Remember that Jesus Christ was
 “ also rich in those miraculous energies communicated
 “ to him, in faith, in utterance, and in knowledge, yea
 “ much richer than ye are; yet for your sakes he
 “ willingly condescended to lead a life of poverty, that
 “ he might compleat the benevolent scheme which he
 “ had undertaken.”

This is so clearly the design of the Apostle, that
 were the advocates of Christ's pre-existence more at-
 tentive to the context, they could never surely urge
 this text in favour of the doctrine they undertake to
 defend.

“ *Jesus saith unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you,*
 “ *before Abraham was, I am.*”*

This, says Dr. E. is “ an assertion which could be
 “ understood in no other sense than as referring to an
 “ actual, positive pre-existence.” Upon this remark I
 would observe, that this passage occurs in a conversa-
 tion which our Lord held with some cavilling Jews.
 He told them, “ if a man keep my saying he shall not
 “ taste of death.” To which they replied, “ Art
 “ thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?
 “ and

* John viii. 58.

“and the prophets are dead; whom makest thou thyself?” In consequence of which he tells them, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it, and was glad.” “Thou art not fifty years old,” said the Jews, “and hast thou seen Abraham?” He answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.” Then took they up stones to cast at him. They seem to profess a great reverence for their father Abraham; he therefore shews them the great difference between Abraham’s conduct and theirs. Abraham rejoiced when favoured with only a far distant view of the Messiah’s coming; but they treated him with opposition and calumny. Designedly mistaking* his meaning, they misinterpret his language, as though he had pretended to a personal acquaintance with Abraham. He however contents himself with replying, “before Abraham was, I am,” *i. e.* I am the Messiah,† agreeable to a Jewish saying, that the law and the Messiah were long before the foundation of the world. This avowal of his Messiahship, though oblique, was too plain for them

* In the course of this conversation, they had previously done the same, for which our Lord reproves them v. 43, saying, “Why do ye not understand my discourse? because ye cannot listen to my doctrine.”

† See v. 12, 24, and 28.

them to misunderstand; exasperated at his pretensions to the character of the long-expected Messiah, according to their custom, when he made these claims, they took up stones to stone him.

The expression *before Abraham was, I am*, is similar to another of the same Evangelist,* *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. Dr. E. observes this latter passage occurs "in a visionary representation." But he should have shewn us, why this form of expression is less admissible into a conversation, than into the description of a vision. The same mode of speaking, however, is adopted on many other occasions. God is said † to have "saved us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before "the world began."

The following remark of a very sensible writer is worthy of attention, "Did we not daily experience
"the power of prejudice to darken our understandings,
"and hinder us from seeing the most palpable contradictions, one might be surprized that any could ever
"suppose our Lord to be so very open and familiar with
"these Pharisees, his most bitter adversaries, as to tell
"them

* Rev. xiii. 8.

† 2 Tim. i. 9.

“them such a wonderful secret concerning himself,
 “that he was the *I am, Jehovah, the eternal God*, as
 “some construe his words; or, according to others,
 “that he had existed with God from the beginning,
 “before the world was, at the same time that so far
 “from being explicit upon the subject, he kept his dis-
 “ciples quite in the dark about a thing so prodigious
 “and extraordinary.”*

“*What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend
 “up where he was before.*”†

Our author observes,‡ that this is “a passage con-
 “cerning the pre-existence of our Saviour, which one
 “would think it impossible to pervert or misapply.”
 Had Dr. E. been sensible of the insuperable difficulties
 to which his interpretation is subject, surely he would
 not have expressed himself with so much confidence.

Jesus had crossed the Lake of Genesareth from
 Capernaum, and fed multitudes in a miraculous man-
 ner with a few loaves and fishes. The miracle had
 such an effect upon the minds of the people, that they
 were

* See Commentaries and Essays, p. 4, 11.

† John vi. 62.

‡ P. 25.

were disposed to take him by force and make him a king. Escaping however from them, he returned to Capernaum, whither they followed him. Knowing their interested views, he exhorts them, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." He also tells them, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Finding their worldly expectations from him disappointed, they took occasion from this figurative language to cavil, although they could not have mistaken his meaning; since what he intended had been explained when he said, "he that *cometh* to me shall never hunger, and he that *believeth* on me shall never thirst." Not only were the worldly-minded Jews displeased, but many also of his disciples, not fully acquainted with the nature of his character, said, "This is a harsh doctrine, who can understand it?" Jesus, perceiving this, said, "Doth this offend *you*? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?"

To understand this passage, the first question is, what is the place to which Christ speaks of ascending, and in which he was before? Does he speak of his ascension to heaven after his resurrection? Or does he refer to some other place, where he had once been, and whither he was again about to ascend.

If

If it be contended, from the circumstance of his calling himself * “ the living bread which came down from “ heaven,” that he refers to his future ascension thither, and if the words are to be understood *literally*, it may be asked, when was Jesus there before? Should it be said, he was there before he was born into this world, it may be replied, that he speaks of the *Son of Man*, who began to exist only at his birth. More consistent with the literal meaning of the text is the hypothesis of Socinus and his followers, who contend that Christ was taken up to heaven previous to the commencement of his ministry, that he might receive his instructions respecting the scheme he should undertake to execute. Wolzogenius, in a note on this passage,† says, “ I do not see “ how Christ could declare more explicitly that he had “ actually been in heaven after his birth of the Virgin, “ than he has done in these words. It is certain he “ does not speak of any person who was the most high “ God, or even an angel, but of *the Son of Man*, of “ the man Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin “ Mary. But a man born upon earth could not possibly have been in heaven, unless he had been taken “ thither after his birth.” Doctor Lardner, however, says, “ we must not understand our Lord too literally;” and Mr. Lindsey, whose remarks are always well

* V. 51.

† Vid. Wolzog. in loc.

well worthy of attention, thus paraphrases the passage;
 “ When you shall see me go up *to heaven* to God,
 “ (alluding to his future ascension) *where I was before*;
 “ *i. e.* from whom I have received my instructions and
 “ authority, you will then understand this language
 “ that I now hold with you, and believe me to be the
 “ Messiah.”* The paraphrase which the Welch
 Freeholder gives the words is the following: “ What
 “ and if this heavenly wisdom by which you are now
 “ instructed and guided, ascends, together with him in
 “ whom it dwells, those heavenly regions whence it
 “ first came.”† Each of these interpretations, not ex-
 cepting that of Socinus, is infinitely preferable to the
 gloss given by the advocates of Christ’s pre-existence,
 a gloss not only unreasonable in itself, but also flatly
 contradicted by the terms of the passage it is designed
 to explain.

I would, however, ask with modesty, whether the
 evidence is sufficiently clear that our Lord really did
 allude

* Mr. Lindsey’s Sequel, p. 221.

† See an excellent pamphlet, entitled *Reasons for Unitarianism, or the Primitive Christian Doctrine*, by a Welch Freeholder. This tract is well worthy the perusal of those who wish to see the arguments in favour of the Unitarian Doctrine exhibited in a small compass with equal candour, judgment, and perspicuity.

allude to his ascension into *heaven*? Is it not probable he referred to a second visit he was then about to make to *Jerusalem*? This interpretation, perhaps, may receive some degree of plausibility from the following remarks:

1st. The word *ἀναβαίνω* here translated to *ascend*, means simply to *go up* from any lower to a higher place, such as from Capernaum, or any other part of Galilee, to Jerusalem. Thus it is said, “the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus *went up* (*ἀνέβη*) to Jerusalem.”* “Go ye up (*ἀναβήτε*) unto this feast, I go not up yet, (*ὅπω ἀναβαίνω*) unto this feast; but his brethren were gone up (*ἀνέβησαν*).† And when he had thus spoken, he went before, *ascending up* (*ἀναβαίνων*) to Jerusalem.”‡ See other passages without number.

2dly. Jesus was down at Capernaum when he spoke these words, v. 59. “These things said he in the synagogue, when he taught in Capernaum.”

3dly. If we restore to their original situations the fifth and sixth chapters of John, which, by some accident or other, evidently have been interchanged, it will almost immediately follow upon this passage, that Jesus went up

* John ii. 13. † Chap. vii. 8, 19. ‡ Luke xix. 28.

up to Jerusalem. "What (said he, chap. vi. 62.) and "if ye shall see the Son of Man go up (*ἀνελθόντα*) "where he was before." The historian adds, (chap. v. 1.) "After this there was a feast of the Jews, and "Jesus went up (*ἀνέβη*) to Jerusalem."

4thly. The propriety of our Lord's saying, "*where I was before*," will appear, when we consider, that according to this Evangelist he had but once before this conversation made a visit to the metropolis of Judæa. Chap. ii. 13. "And the Jews' passover was "at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

5thly. The circumstance attending his visit to Jerusalem, he well knew, would be a more powerful cause of offence to his followers than they had now received. When they murmured, he said, "Doth this offend "you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man go up "where he was before?" On his former visit to Jerusalem, his disciples, who had heard the testimony which John bore concerning him, who had beholden the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit upon him, who had witnessed his preternatural knowledge when he called Nathaniel, who had seen the miracle of changing water into wine, and who expected he was about to assert his commission as a temporal Prince, must, it cannot be doubted, have entertained very high expectations from

the reception he should meet with from the chief priests and elders. Their hopes however were disappointed; for we find that "he did not commit himself to them, "because he knew all men."* On his second visit, which he was now about to make, he knew that he should be openly persecuted. We find that this was actually the case; for we read, "therefore did the Jews "persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him."† These repeated persecutions must have been a great cause of offence to his disciples, actuated as they were by false notions of his character. When Jesus "began to "shew unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jeru- "salem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief "priests, and scribes," even Peter himself "took him, "and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from "thee, master, this shall not be unto thee."‡

I would therefore paraphrase the words in some such manner as this: "Ye have seen me feed 5000 persons "with five loaves and two small fishes, and ye joined "the multitude who wished on this account to make "me a king; but having been informed that you are "not to seek after me for the meat which perisheth, but "that which endureth for ever, your prospects are be- "clouded, and you murmur at my doctrine. If this
" my

* John ii. 24.

† John v. 16.

‡ Matt. xvi. 22.

“ my language offend you, how will you be able to
 “ hear the intelligence, that, on my visit which I am
 “ now about to make to Jerufalem, I fhall have fuffered
 “ more from its inhabitants than on my former visit,
 “ and been obliged to flee, left they fhould put me to
 “ death ?”

I have been rather tedious perhaps in my remarks on this text; but it required peculiar attention, fince the advocates for the pre-existence of Chrift confider it as decifive in their favour; with what juftice, the reader will now judge.

*“ I came forth from the Father, and am come into the
 “ world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father.”**

“ Why we are not (faith our author †) as literally to
 “ underftand his coming forth from the Father, as his
 “ going back to the Father, what imaginable reafon
 “ can, with any appearance of truth, be affigned?” Dr.
 E. would have difcovered fome *imaginable* reafon for interpreting one part of this paffage figuratively, and another part literally, if he had reflected that this mode of writing was common with f acred as well as profane writers. Had he turned to Matt. viii. 22, he would

K 2

have

* John xvi. 28. † P. 27.

have seen, "Let the dead bury their dead." And 1 Theff. v. 4—8, he would have found the words *day* and *night* employed sometimes to signify the hours of natural light and darkness, and at other times to intend purity and knowledge, vice and ignorance.

To come forth from God is a similar expression to *being sent from God*; indeed the latter comprehends the former. But the phrase *being sent from God* signifies nothing more than a divine commission; "there was a man *sent from God*," that is, divinely commissioned, "whose name was John."* The phrase therefore *coming from God* does not imply the notion of pre-existence.

To come into the world evidently means nothing more in scriptural language, than to enter upon the discharge of a sacred commission. This appears from the language held by the Jews, who never entertained any idea of the Messiah's pre-existence: "This, said they, is of a truth that prophet that should *come into the world*."† This Jesus himself confirms, when he says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;"‡ in which passage he speaks of his coming
into

* John i. 6. † John vi. 14. ‡ John xviii. 37.

into the world, as an event subsequent to his birth. The language of our Lord respecting his disciples, who are not supposed to have pre-existed, is quite decisive; "as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."*

The words therefore may be thus paraphrased: "I received my commission from God, and willingly undertook to discharge it; and when I have finished the work given me to do, I shall go to that great Being who sent me, and receive the reward he has promised."

These are the texts produced by Dr. E. by which he informs us the *pre-existence* of Christ is made *clear and indubitable*. The foregoing explanation of them, I trust, has convinced the candid reader, that they teach no doctrine contrary to that of Peter after the resurrection of Christ, when (if ever) this Apostle must be considered as fully acquainted with the Christian system, "that Jesus of Nazareth was proved to be a man sent from God, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him."†

K 3

SECT.

* John xvii. 18. † Acts ii. 22.

S E C T. II.

On the supposed Deity of Jesus Christ.

THE deity of Christ is a part of the doctrine of the Trinity, than which no notion more ridiculous has ever been maintained among the most barbarous nations of the globe. A few words will shew its absurdity and incredibility, and consequently that it cannot be taught in any true system of religion. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are all said to be equally God. By this proposition it is either meant that the phrases Father, Son, and Spirit, are three denominations of the *same* being, or that they are the names of three *different* beings. If they are only the several denominations of the same being, the persons who use these terms are to all intents and purposes *Unitarians*, sometimes choosing to call upon the one eternal God by the name of the Father, sometimes by the name of Son, and sometimes by the name of Spirit. But if these three terms are not merely the names of the same individual being, they must be the names of three different beings; and then to assert that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are God, will be the same as to assert that there are three equal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent Gods, which is a contradiction in terms.

Orthodox

Orthodox Trinitarians, however, tell us, that though they deny the terms Father, Son, and Spirit, to mean only the several names of the same individual being, still they maintain there is but one God. To plain common sense this is a palpable contradiction, and inconsistent with the very first principles of arithmetic. From this imputation they attempt to rescue themselves by quibbling with the term *person*. They say the Deity consists of three *persons*, though he is but one God. But of what avail is this distinction? What is meant by person? Is it not an intelligent agent? If so, when they say that the one God consists of three persons, they mean that he consists of three intelligent agents. If each of these intelligent agents be possessed of the same perfections in the same degree, that is, equally possessed of all the attributes of Deity, then God consists of three intelligent agents, each of whom is possessed of all the attributes of God; that is, *the self-existent, infinite, and eternal God, consists of three self-existent, infinite, and eternal Gods*. How Trinitarians can save themselves from this imputation, I am unable to devise. To say there is only a three-fold *modal* distinction, in the divine essence, is either resolvable on one hand into the distinction of names, which is only Socinianism, or on the other hand into the distinction of persons, which is absolute Tritheism. To tell us that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery, is nothing less than
to

to give up the dispute, and to confess the charge of absurdity.

The reply I have now given to the Trinitarians appears to me sufficient; and it would be superfluous to reason with them in any other way, till they have cleared themselves from the imputation of absurdity. It is however maintained, that the scriptures teach the doctrine of the Trinity; and every friend to Christianity will be zealous to vindicate them from every aspersion which impeaches their rationality, and lessens their credibility. On this ground I shall now examine those passages of scripture in which Dr. E. asserts the doctrine of Christ's deity is contained.

*"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God; the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."**

The

* John i. 1, &c.

The mistakes, into which Christians have long fallen, respecting the meaning of the Apostle in this passage, were probably owing to the early and unhappy mixture which took place between the tenets of heathen philosophy, and the doctrines of Christianity. This philosophy, by degrees, taught the believers in the gospel to consider as a distinct being that divine wisdom which is here so beautifully personified by the Apostle. Hence arose our present very erroneous version of this passage. Vitringa, and Dr. Campbell, together with the excellent Mr. Lindsey, (by whom these authors are quoted*) as well as many other judicious Christians, are of opinion that the Evangelist here alludes to that beautiful celebration of divine wisdom, Prov. viii; and that the term *λογος* should not be translated *word* but *wisdom*.

Mr. Lindsey's version is as follows: "In the beginning was wisdom, and wisdom was with God, and
 " God was wisdom. The same was in the beginning
 " with God. All things were made by *it*, and without
 " *it* was nothing made. Ver. 10. *It* was in the world,
 " and the world was made by *it*, and the world knew *it*
 " not. Ver. 14. And wisdom became a man, and we
 beheld

* See Mr. Lindsey's second address, p. 25; where the meaning of this text is fully investigated and clearly ascertained.

“ beheld *its* glory, the glory as of the well-beloved of
“ the Father, full of grace and truth.”

All this is perfectly consistent with the simple humanity of our blessed Lord, and seems a very suitable introduction to a history of the life of him, who was employed to reveal to mankind that dispensation, in which was peculiarly displayed *the manifold wisdom of God*.

“ *I and my Father are one.*”*

Our Lord here only speaks of the unity of intention which subsisted between God and him. Discouraging concerning his people, ver. 28, he says, “ none shall pluck them out of my hand :” and, in the next verse, confirms the confidence of his disciples, by saying that God had the same regard with himself for them, “ my Father who gave them me *is greater than all*, and “ none shall be able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” It immediately follows, “ *I and my Father are one;*” *i. e.* My father and I have the same benevolent intentions towards my faithful disciples. Our Lord’s language here is satisfactorily explained by John xvii. 11, where he prays that his followers might be

* John x. 30. See p. 29.

be one, as he and his Father were one; not one in essence, but in design.

"Let not your heart be troubled, &c."*

This fourteenth chapter of John, says Dr. E.† *appears to me perfectly decisive and satisfactory* on the subject of the deity of Christ. This is truly surprising, for the whole chapter appears to me totally irreconcilable with the strange notion of Christ's divine nature.

"V. 1. Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." "What (exclaims Dr. E.) are we to believe?" Surely not that Jesus is the Supreme God; for in this very passage he expressly distinguishes himself from God. He informs us in the eleventh verse what we are to believe: that "he was in the Father and the Father in him;" that is, as we learn from chap. xvii. 21, that the Father and he were equally disposed to protect them. In proof of this he adds, "believe me for the very work's sake;" as though he had said, "that God should enable me to work miracles on your account, is an evidence that he will not forsake you."

Ver. 7.

* John xiv. 1, &c. &c.

† P. 29.

V. 7, 8, 9. "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. And how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" By these words, Dr. E. informs us, Jesus was teaching his disciples "his absolute oneness with his divine Father with respect to his original essential nature." But an unbiaſſed mind must see that his object was to comfort his disciples, who were troubled at the thoughts of his departure, by the consideration that God was their friend. This truth Jesus urges them to believe, and assures them, that had they entertained proper ideas of his character, and the energy by which he spoke and acted, they would not have harboured any doubts concerning the dispositions of God towards them. Philip, however, not fully understanding his master's language, ignorantly requested to be indulged with a sight of the invisible God. This idle curiosity and pertinacious unbelief, Jesus pointedly reprov'd, by referring to the miraculous powers he possessed, and which were a more glorious manifestation of Deity than was ever exhibited to the world. That he did not mean to refer to any *oneness of nature* with the Supreme Being, which Jesus is erroneously

erroneously supposed to have possessed, but only to prove, from the miracles he performed on this account, the kind regard of God to them, is evident from what follows: "The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself, but the Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Here he most evidently disclaims all preternatural powers, and ascribes his miracles wholly to that energy of Deity which resided in him.

Dr. EVANS asserts that in this verse, Christ "makes a clear distinction between his human and divine nature." But so far is this from being true, that Christ disclaims all miraculous power *as his own*, by declaring solemnly, that his doctrines were not his own, and that his works were not his own. No language can be less ambiguous; no declaration can be more decisive. The text makes mention of two persons, *Christ* and his *Father*. By *Christ* we understand the person who then spake, and by his *Father* the great God who sent him. Christ himself asserts that *he* did not the works, but that his *Father* did them. The Trinitarians, however, maintain that Christ actually did the works as well as his Father. Here Christ and the Trinitarians flatly contradict each other. Whom then are we to believe? For my own part, I do not hesitate to give my assent to the assertion of Christ, and to reject the dream of his two natures as unscriptural, childish, and ridiculous.

The

The most approved creeds of Trinitarians teach us that Christ is God and man in *one person*; so that when, speaking of *himself*, he uses the personal pronouns *I, me, myself*, they must understand him to speak of what constitutes that person; but if he speaks of himself now in his human nature, and then in his divine nature, and attributes to each nature personal actions, then he represents himself not as *one* person, but as *two* persons. To reconcile his representation of himself as two persons, with his being actually but one, would be a difficulty too great for Unitarians to solve; but to those curious arithmeticians, who are in the habit of making three to be equal to one, and one equal to three, this may appear no difficulty at all.

Those who heard the discourses of Jesus were undoubtedly ignorant that he possessed these two natures. When therefore they heard him say that *he* did not the works, but that his *Father* did them, they believed him; they also assented to the truth of his assertion, that he was unacquainted with the day of judgment. But had they known that he actually was at the same time the author of the miracles, and acquainted with the day of judgment, surely they would not have entertained any very exalted opinion of his veracity; they would have charged him, and that justly, with quibbling and deceit.

The

The doctrine of the two natures of Christ one would imagine was invented to render the scriptures unintelligible, and to exhibit our great master in the character of an equivocator. That it represents him in this unfavourable light, and that persons have attempted to justify their falshoods, by the authority of his supposed example, may be gathered from the following anecdote:

Garnet, a Jesuit, being arraigned for the part he took in the gunpowder plot, and charged with equivocation as countenanced by the Romish church, answered, "That to lie in any cause is held a sin, and evil. "Howsoever, (said he) of eight degrees which St. Augustine maketh, the lowest indeed is to lie for the procuring of the good of some, without the hurting of any. So then our equivocation is not to maintain lying, but to defend the use of certain propositions. "For a man may be asked of one who hath no authority to interrogate, or examined concerning something which belongeth not to his cognizance who asketh, (as what a man thinketh, &c.) So that no man may equivocate when he ought to tell the truth, "OTHERWISE HE MAY: and so St. Augustine upon John saith, that CHRIST DENIED HE KNEW THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, VIZ. WITH THE PURPOSE TO TELL IT TO HIS DISCIPLES."*

* See a publication entitled "the Gunpowder Treason," reprinted in 1679.

Every sincere Christian, who thinks of his divinely empowered master with reverence and gratitude, must be grieved, when he perceives such reflexions upon the character of him "who did no sin, and in whose mouth there was no guile."

What Jesus saith in the 12th verse respecting the works which would be performed by those who believed in him, seems only designed to console his disciples in the prospect of his departure, and not, as Dr. E. supposes, to prove "that he was not a mere man like themselves." This appears from what follows in the 15th and 16th verses; "If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Hence it appears, that by *believing in him*, he meant keeping his commandments: and he makes to those who believed in him, or kept his commandments, this promise; not that of his own power and authority he would send the Comforter, but that he would *pray to his Father* that he might do it. This passage, therefore, instead of countenancing the notion of a superior nature in Christ, expressly teaches the contrary.

"Ver. 28. *My Father is greater than I.*"

"This

“ This passage (saith Dr. E.) has been boasted of by
 “ many of the opposers of the deity of our blessed
 “ Saviour, as decidedly in their favour, but to me it ap-
 “ pears a striking proof of that sublime doctrine.” This
 reminds me of a dialogue of an ingenious writer, *between*
a dying man, and a bigoted person in perfect health. “ An
 “ inhabitant of a village in his last agonies was insulted
 “ by a man in good health, who thus addressed him :

Bigot.

“ Wretch ! think as I do immediately ; enter into
 “ the opposition of the second council of Nice against
 “ the council of Francfort ; explain in an instant, how
 “ these words, ‘ My Father is greater than I am,
 “ clearly signify, ‘ I am as great as he is.’ Tell me
 “ how the Father communicates all to the Son, except
 “ his paternity, or I will order thy body to be given to
 “ birds of prey.”

Dying Man.

“ I hardly understand what you say to me. Your
 “ menaces strike my ears confusedly ; they make my
 “ mind uneasy, and my last moments dreadful. In
 “ the name of God, have pity upon me !”

Well might the poor creature attempt to move his
 tormentor to compassion.

L

Nor

Nor are the words of Jesus, "My Father is greater than I," chargeable with "folly and impiety," upon the supposition that he was only a human being. The minds of the disciples were dejected at the prospect of losing their instructor and friend; and he endeavours, by a variety of considerations, to reconcile them to the event. He promises them that he will come again, to take them to himself; and, as a signal that this promise should be fulfilled, that he would pray to his Father to send them the Comforter. He again gently rebukes them for their distress. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said, I go away and come again to you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said unto you, I go unto the Father; *for my Father is greater than I.*"* As though he had said, "Be not thus unreasonable in your grief, I will certainly return to take you to the place I shall prepare for you. And *if ye loved me*, that is, if you were truly attached to my cause, ye would have rejoiced rather that I went away, that I might obtain for you a miraculous energy, which will not only comfort you in trouble, but most powerfully recommend to the world that cause in which we are engaged. Then, though I shall have left you, you will be in the hands of one infinitely
 " more

"more able to protect you; for my Father is greater than I."

"Do you ever hear (saith Dr. E.) Moses, or any of the prophets, talk in this strain." Had they been in similar circumstances I doubt not they might, with the greatest propriety, have expressed themselves in the same terms. The language of Jacob, a little before his death, to his surrounding children, very much resembles that of Jesus to his weeping disciples: "Behold I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers."* And indeed it is such language as any good man might use, when his friends or children were sorrowing on account of his approaching departure or death. "I have been accustomed to advise, to direct, and to comfort you, but I leave you in the hands of that infinitely wise, and powerful, and good Being, whose patronage is of far greater importance than mine."

"It is a fact (saith Dr. E.†) that for asserting his deity in the most solemn manner, our blessed Lord appears actually to have been crucified." The Jews, it is true, and even the High Priest himself, charged Christ with blasphemy. But upon what

L 2

ground

* Genesis xlviii. 21.

† P. 43.

ground did they make this accusation? They did it upon his claims to the character of the Messiah, the Son of God. That the Jews, who were as ready to raise the cry of *blasphemy*, as modern bigots that of *heresy*, affected to understand him as though he conveyed by the term *Son of God*, a blasphemous idea, we learn from another passage. "For a good work (said they) we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."* That he made pretensions to no such dignity is evident from his reply: "If ye called them *gods*, by whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the *Son of God*?" We may therefore, from the authority of Jesus himself, assert, that when before the High Priest he avowed himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, he laid no claim to a superior nature, and that their accusation of blasphemy was a wilful misinterpretation of his meaning.

I have now examined every passage of importance adduced by Dr. E. to prove the superior nature of Christ, and I hope shewn satisfactorily, that they give not the least colour to the Platonic notion of his pre-existence, much less to the cabbalistick dogma of his absolute equality with his Father.

* John x. 33.

If then, as our author maintains, the doctrine of the atonement be dependant for its support on the doctrine of Christ's deity, the explanation now given to the passages adduced in favour of the *latter* must be overthrown, before the truth of the *former* can be established.



C H A P. VI.

*On the consequences of the Doctrine of the
Atonement.*

DR. EVANS informs* us that this doctrine “makes a glorious display of the divine character and excellence. The justice and holiness of the divine character, (saith he) it must be allowed, are infinitely exalted and magnified by the sacrifice of Christ.” And again, “It must be acknowledged, that the reality and enormity of human guilt may be publicly and solemnly recognized by the offering up of a vicarious substituted victim, and that the justice and holiness of the law, which annexes death to the violation of it, may be, and is hereby more effectually and fully displayed, than it could possibly be in any other way whatever.” That these assertions should appear so evidently true to our author’s mind would seem remarkable, did we not know that habit is able to reconcile us to sentiments the most paradoxical and ridiculous.

The

* P. 195.

The notion that a vicarious sacrifice would have a peculiar tendency to exalt the justice and holiness of God and of his law, as well as to display the evil of sin, seems to be founded on unworthy apprehensions of the divine attributes of justice and holiness. If the justice of God be nothing more than his disposition to treat his creatures agreeably to their moral condition; and if his holiness mean nothing farther than his freedom from every vicious propensity and practice; which ideas appear to me all we can suppose the terms to convey, without attributing revenge and cruelty to the Father of mercy; then it will be difficult to perceive, how the justice and holiness of God or his law are displayed by any *vicarious substituted victim*. If a man, by a vicious course of conduct, has contracted any degree of guilt, his moral condition has become such, that the justice and holiness of God induce him to inflict upon the offender a degree of punishment proportioned to his offence. By this infliction of punishment the Deity would prove, that the laws of his government directly tended to the correction, and finally to the extirpation of moral evil. But if the Deity, rather than punish the guilty person, should choose some innocent being as the object of that suffering, which the other had deserved, it would evidently appear, that under the divine government expedients were invented, by which the sinner might escape unpunished; the
sanctions

sanctions of the laws of the divine administration would seem to be unsteady, and their influence would be consequently weakened. Therefore the sacrifice of Christ, or any other vicarious substituted victim, would be so far from displaying the divine justice and holiness, that it would shew their requirements might be superseded; and would be so far from recognizing the guilt of sin, that it would shew that the offender, with all his guilt, might escape the punishment to which his crimes had justly subjected him.

Farther; "The doctrine of the atonement (saith "Dr. E.*)" exalts the divine *benevolence*, in a manner "and in a degree beyond the power of imagination "to conceive." 'Strange,' (I may reply) 'that the 'remotest idea of this kind should ever have arisen in 'the human mind!' For whatever benevolence, upon this scheme, appeared in the salvation of mankind, was discovered by Jesus Christ. The Father seems to wear a stern and threatening aspect, menacing eternal vengeance, and not consenting "to lay his fury by," till the drops of his own Son's blood had "calmed his "frowning face." The Father might have "formed "the wondrous plan;" he might have *consented* that his Son should be a sacrifice for us; but these would
have

have been no great proofs of benevolence, if at the same time he would not in the least relax in his demands, but insist upon a full equivalent for the debt contracted.

But our author says,* “no one surely would suppose that a judge who should find out an expedient, whereby it would become perfectly safe for him to exercise infinitely greater mercy than he could have done upon any other plan, without endangering the law, lowering the sanctity and importance of it, or at all lessening the purity, vigour, and extent of it, would become less benevolent, or less merciful, than as though he had made use of no such expedient, and taken no care to establish the dignity of the law, but wantonly exercised a mischievous kind of mercy, without making the least provision against the abuse of it.”

It is true, that the judge who maintains the importance and sanctity of a law calculated to promote the happiness of man, is more benevolent than the judge who is careless respecting the dignity of that law. But the proper question is, which judge would best support the dignity of the law, best promote the happiness of man, and consequently be most benevolent; he who,
suffering

* P. 212.

suffering the transgressor to escape, would fix upon some other person disinterested enough to suffer what the criminal had merited; or he who would uniformly inflict the penalty of the law upon *the soul that sinneth*, unless there was something in the character as a reason to mitigate or to annul the sentence? These objects, viz. to establish the dignity of the law, and thus promote human happiness, could not be attained by the *former* judge, because neither of the two ends of punishment, the reformation of offenders, and the terror of others, would be effected. The criminal would not feel the effects of his vices, and consequently would be without this great motive to improvement; spectators would observe this, and therefore would not be restrained by fear from imitating his vicious conduct. Whereas the *latter* judge would pursue the direct method to magnify the law. The offender would feel the punishment annexed to his crimes; this would shew him the folly of them and induce him to reform; and his fellow-creatures would see in his punishment an affecting example of the danger resulting from such practices. Nor would it be a *mischievous kind of mercy* in the judge, to mitigate, or to annul the punishment, provided he had satisfactory proof that some previous circumstances tended to alleviate the crime, or that the present state of the offender's mind, in any degree, rendered the punishment unnecessary. This lenity
would

would prove only that the law, though strict, was not unjust, and that its functions were simply designed to extirpate vice, to promote the virtue, and consequently the happiness of society.

Again our author contends,* that "this doctrine is "of Almighty efficacy in the *salvation* of a sinner." And he represents every other system as "insufficient "to give *peace of conscience* to the trembling sinner." In reply I would ask, whether the plain divine declaration, that "*if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,*" be not as firm a foundation for hope, as the assurance that all our guilt is imputed to another person? Surely there would be no greater reason to question the divine veracity, in the former case, than in the latter: nay, there would be far less reason to hesitate, since it is antecedently probable that the source of that mercy, which we so much admire in our fellow-creatures, should be itself merciful; while it is antecedently improbable, not to say incredible, that the great Creator and Governor of the boundless universe should *die* as a substitute for a few atoms called men.

Besides, the promise of pardon upon repentance has a peculiar tendency to abase the offender before his
Maker,

* P. 218.

Maker, and to create a sacred jealousy, lest he should be again betrayed through the deceitfulness of sin; whilst the doctrine of imputation "leaves the proud "cankered heart of the sinner unhumbled," and leads him with presumptuous confidence to challenge the justice of heaven.

Nor does there appear to be any thing peculiar in the doctrine of the atonement, which, according to our author, inspires those who receive it with "*purity and joy.*" How can that system of faith, which declares that we are not accepted by the Deity, on account of any moral excellence we may possess, but on account of the merit of another, be said, with justice, to have any remarkably good effect in encouraging an attention to personal holiness? One would imagine this effect would be much better produced by a system, which taught us, that we were acceptable in the sight of God, in exact proportion to the value of our moral characters. Should it be contended that *gratitude*, in the believer in the atonement, is a most powerful principle of action, effectually influencing him to the performance of duty; it may be replied, that gratitude, if by it be meant any return to the Almighty for his goodness, is a very improper motive to obedience. *Can a man be profitable unto God? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him that thou makest thy*
ways

*ways perfect?** Gratitude, also, though considered only as that thankful recollection of favours received, which produces a ready compliance with all the duties God has enjoined, is but a collateral incitement to obedience; the grand reason why we should obey the commands of God is, that in a virtuous conduct consists the supreme good of the individual, and the general order and happiness of rational society. And even this collateral motive, gratitude to the Supreme Legislator of the universe, will be diminished uniformly in proportion as our obligations to the Mediator, as the procuring cause of our salvation, are increased; and our gratitude to the great God who made and governs us, will be increased, in proportion as we perceive that we are indebted to him alone for the blessings of Christianity. The notion of a full price being paid by another, in consideration of which the Deity becomes propitious, greatly obstructs, if it does not entirely supersede, the influence of gratitude.

And may I not ask, which man is most likely to be happy, he who views the great God who made him, as insisting, with relentless severity, on satisfaction or death, in consequence of every transgression in his frail creatures;

* Job. xxii. 2, &c.

tures; or the person who contemplates the Deity in the character of a compassionate parent, *who knows our frame, who remembers we are dust*, and who passes by the transgressions of his penitent offspring? Who can hesitate in his reply? Dr. E. has chosen to decide the question by an appeal to fact; but his opponents will make a similar appeal: this, therefore, being an argument which will prove equally on each side, will be of no advantage to either. I am indeed persuaded in my own mind, though I do not expect to make a single convert by the declaration, that the principles maintained by the Unitarian Christian are peculiarly well qualified "to speak peace to his conscience, to set the guilty soul at liberty, to enlarge his heart, to refine his affections, to establish his hopes, to purify his mind, to brighten and expand his prospects, to take away the sting of death, to shed abroad the love of God in his heart, and to speak to his soul the words of eternal life."

These short remarks upon the principal passages in Dr. EVANS's Discourses, I would intreat the reader to peruse with a mind divested of prejudice, and inspired with an ardent love of truth. All truth is of importance to the happiness of man; but the value of religious truth who can appreciate? "The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver,

“silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is
 “more precious than rubies, and all the things thou
 “canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Her
 “ways are ways of pleasantness; and all her paths
 “are peace.”



5 JY61

A P P E N D I X.

P A R T II.

*A Letter to the Rev. David Bogue, of Gosport, on
his Sermon entitled, "The great Importance of
"having right Sentiments in Religion, preached
"before an association of Ministers, at Ring-
"wood, Hants."*

"THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN IS CAST DOWN,
"WHICH ACCUSED THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY
"AND NIGHT." JOHN.

REVEREND SIR,

THE association sermon with which you have been
pleased to favour the world, it is probable, I
should never have seen, had it not been for the honest
zeal of a well-meaning Calvinistic friend, who, anxious
for my re-conversion, recommended it earnestly to my
careful perusal. Having run through two editions, it
is deemed, I apprehend, by persons of your party, to be
M possessed

possessed of considerable merit; but being perhaps better acquainted than you or they, with the characters and tenets of the Christians it opposes, I shall take the liberty to point out a few of its errors and misrepresentations.

After shewing, in terms to which no description of Christians will make any very material objection, the importance of truth, you undertake to teach the world what truth is, by means of *twelve tests*, which you confidently inform us, “*flow naturally* from the general “strain and spirit of the sacred oracles.” Having proposed your twelve tests, you employ them as a jury by which to try the pretensions to truth of two systems of faith; one of which you presume, even before the trial, to term the *Evangelical* system, and the other is that professed by those who denominate themselves *rational* Christians. A jury being empannelled, which you knew would be very accommodating to your purpose, unqualified and unauthorized, you gravely place yourself upon the seat of judgment. Being yourself a professor of the *Evangelical* system, the event of the trial may be easily predicted.

Before you had employed your twelve tests of truth, it would have been only fair to have asked some professors of the rational religion, or enquired into their most approved writings, whether your tests were universally admitted. This, Sir, it appears you omitted

to

to do; for had you consulted them, they would have objected loudly against some of the criteria by which the question was to be decided. Rational Christians would have agreed with you, that "right sentiments represent God as clothed with every perfection;" that they "represent human nature to be in a deplorable condition;" that they "ascribe our restoration to the divine favour entirely to the grace of God, to the death of Christ, and to the power of the Holy Ghost;" that "when they are embraced and received with a lively faith, they fill the heart with peace and hope;" that they "produce a conduct that is far superior to heathen morality in its extent, its principle and its ends;" that they "produce a high degree of pleasure in the exercises of religion;" that they "kindle in the breast a fervent zeal and a deep concern for the salvation of the souls of others;" and that they "inspire the heart with hope, and peace, and joy, at the hour of death." Rational Christians might have made some slight objections to a few puritanical, mysterious, and ambiguous terms; but, if permitted to connect their own ideas with the language you have employed, they would not have excepted greatly against those tests, the heads of which I have just recited. The remaining tests they would have considered as containing notions, which proceed from "torturing scripture to make it favour a particular scheme, and

"not flowing naturally from the general strain and
"spirit of the sacred oracles."

You say,* Sir, that "right sentiments fill the mind
"with *the highest* ideas of the dignity, power and love
"of Jesus Christ." Rational Christians venerate, and
strive to imitate, the virtues of their divinely commis-
sioned master; they believe in his exaltation to a state
of elevated dignity and glory in the heavenly world;
and though, they have not seen him, they ardently love
him, and rejoice in the belief of his second coming,
with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They are
willing to ascribe *very high* degrees of dignity, power,
and love to Jesus; but the *highest*, they maintain, are
only due to his God and Father, to that original cause
of every other person and existence, "who is jealous
"of his honour, and will not give it to another."

You select texts of scripture, Sir, in support of this
test, to which rational Christians give a different, and,
as appears to them, a more consistent interpretation.
You tell us Christ is called "God over all blessed for
"ever:" but did you not know that the passage might
be rendered "who is over all, God be blessed, for
"ever?" You affirm that Christ "thought it not
"robbery to be equal to God:" but did you not
know

* P. 14.

know that this was an unwarrantable translation, and that the phrase should be rendered, "did not think it a prize to appear like God?" You say "God was manifest in the flesh" of Christ, and that "in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" but were you so deplorably ignorant of scriptural criticism, as not to know that the former of these passages probably is translated from a false reading in our common editions of the original? or did you not choose to inform your readers, that both these passages give us no higher ideas of the person of Christ, than the apostle Peter gives us of Christians, when he informs us they were *partakers of the divine nature*; or than we derive from the apostle Paul, when he prays that the Ephesians *might be filled with all the fullness of God*? You tell us, "we are commanded to honour the Son even as we honour the Father;" but you should have told your hearers also, that our Saviour here claims no honour, but what arises from the evidence he gave of being the messenger of God. You say, "in baptism we are devoted to the Son equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost;" but you will find it difficult to shew from scripture, that we are devoted in baptism either to Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. You say the Lord's supper was instituted peculiarly to the honour of Christ; "that there his disciples may *worship and adore him*;" but should you not have condescended to inform us by what

passage of scripture you are warranted to make such an assertion? From these instances, sir, does it not evidently appear that you have actually “tortured scripture to make it favour a particular scheme?”

It is truly curious, that in a note to this head, you should refer your readers to Bishop SHERLOCK’s discourses on Philippians ii. 5, 11. Had you any tolerable share of skill in theological controversy, surely you must have seen, that they strike at the very root of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the pre-existent dignity of the person of Christ, by proving satisfactorily, that all the honour ascribed to Christ in the New Testament, is in consequence of the faithful discharge of his mediatorial engagements. Bishop SHERLOCK, sir, on account of these discourses, was very generally suspected of Arianism; I trust your commendation of them will not subject you to similar suspicion. Cheerfully do I join with you in recommending them to the careful perusal of our readers, since, pardon the Egotism, they were the first writings which opened my own eyes to the glaring falsehood of the Trinitarian heresy.

Another of your tests, sir, is equally objectionable with the former. “Right sentiments, when they are received into the heart, and begin to produce their effect, create very great anxiety about the salvation of the soul. The person feels great uneasiness, great
“grief,

"grief, and frequently great terror and distress of conscience."* I grant that when a man discovers the impropriety of his conduct, and recollects many circumstances by which his guilt has been aggravated, it is natural for him to feel a considerable share of anxiety and distress; these sensations however are by no means the effects of what you call "right sentiments received into the heart," but are only produced by a fear of the consequences attendant upon vice. This uneasiness of mind is not the natural, necessary effect of a proper reception of Christianity. The sinner is first called upon to *repent*; but repentance signifies merely a change of mind, and implies no peculiarly painful sensations. We find also that the first emotion felt by many of the primitive converts was that of joy. When the inhabitants of Samaria received the gospel, we are told there was great joy in that city. They experienced nothing of what modern enthusiasts term *a work of grace in the heart*, first of all torturing them with the most dreadful apprehensions, before they were permitted to embrace the glorious promises of Christianity. It may therefore be concluded that right sentiments do not uniformly produce those dreadful effects which you have ascribed to them.

I must

I must not forget, sir, to notice your last criterion of right sentiments. You say "they will always be opposed by the self-righteous and the worldly wise."* If opposition be a proof that the sentiments which are opposed are true, (which is a principle I am much inclined to doubt) then you have furnished the Unitarian with an additional argument in favour of his creed; and even every misrepresentation which your sermon is designed to circulate concerning him, should lead him to retain with a more steady faith the doctrines he has embraced. The believer of the simple humanity of Jesus must lay it to his account, to hear the fierce anathemas of the *self-righteous* bigot. He must also expect that the *worldly wise*, who are interested in the support of existing corruptions, will attempt to gain currency for the foulest calumnies upon his character and his tenets, and even strive to keep in force those persecuting laws, which seem designed to mark him as a dangerous member of society. The doctrine of the cross, that is, that the venerable founder of our religion was one of the human race, whom the Jews ignominiously crucified, is indeed foolishness to Trinitarian zealots. So inveterate are their prejudices against it, that they would rather renounce Christianity entirely, than submit to the evidence of this simple truth. Even
you,

you, sir, rather than receive it, would not scruple to say,
 “ that more inaccurate, obscure, and blundering writers,
 “ and more liable to deceive, than the disciples of Jesus
 “ of Nazareth, were never seen since the beginning of
 “ time; and the most rude and illiterate peasant that
 “ ever tilled the earth, if left entirely to himself, would
 “ express his ideas with infinitely greater clearness and
 “ precision, than the Apostles of Christ have done,
 “ though guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
 “ of God.”*

Unjust and inadmissible as some of these tests are, the manner in which you have applied them to decide between the respective claims of the *evangelical*, and the *rational* systems, is still more objectionable. The account you have given of rational Christians and their opinions, proceeds either from the want of information, or a deliberate intention to misrepresent. That it proceeds from a deliberate intention to misrepresent, charity, “ which hopeth all things,” forbids me to assert. Your erroneous statement therefore must be occasioned by the want of information; consequently you must pardon me, if I consider you as incompetent to the subject upon which you have written, and take the liberty to recommend it to the association of ministers
 in

* Vid. p. 23, 24.

in the county of Hants, when they wish to be informed respecting the state of religion in this country, to request the assistance of some gentleman who is qualified for the undertaking.

You accuse us, sir, of excluding *holiness* and *justice* from the catalogue of the divine attributes. You then ask, "does not the scripture, in a thousand places, assert the justice of the most High?" "*In such cases*" (you tell us) the common refuge is in various readings, new translations, and interpolations. These form the sanctuary of rational believers, when the sacred scripture, which we think the highest reason, speaks fully and plainly against their system.* Now, sir, unless you can shew some examples, from the approved writings of rational Christians, in which they have attempted to tamper with the sacred writings, for the sake of robbing the Deity of his justice, your charge must be considered as a false accusation, and we shall have a specimen by which to judge of the attention to be paid to your assertions. I say, in which they have attempted to *tamper* with the sacred writings, since every effort to establish the most authentic reading, to introduce the most accurate translation, and to expunge every interpolation, rather entitles us to commendation than

* P. 20.

than censure. You, sir, perhaps may wish to retain, with sacred reverence, every letter of our common version, and vindicate it as fully expressive of the real sentiments of the Evangelists and Apostles. Thus you will ensure the loud applauses of the vulgar, and probably those of the gentlemen who requested the publication of your discourse; it is not, however, my concern to determine, whether these *flattering* compliments will be sufficient to console you under the contumely, to which you will be exposed, from every man of understanding and literature. Rational Christians are not only exempt from the guilt of attempting to pervert the sacred oracles, but also from your charge of endeavouring to deprive the Deity of his sanctity and justice. They see, they adore, and they strive to imitate that divine *holiness* which is exhibited in the volume of revelation, and which they discover in the tendency of every dispensation to promote virtue, and to banish vice from the universe. Their reverence for the *justice* of God, they display in every attempt to prove, that no transfers, sacrifices, or substitutions, can save the obdurate offender; and that the trembling penitent shall ever meet with a welcome reception at the footstool of divine mercy, and with that gratuitous pardon, for which an unfeigned repentance qualifies him. Their firm belief in the unimpeachable justice, and their awful respect for the immaculate sanctity of God, they
consider

consider as perfectly reconcileable with the assertion that "he is all mercy and goodness;" because they are fully persuaded that his sanctity and justice lead him to punish vice, merely for the sake of promoting the order and the happiness of his government.

You put the following language into the mouths of rational Christians: "Human nature has received little or no injury from the fall. Man's dispositions are naturally good, if not corrupted by bad advice or example: and by a proper exertion of his faculties and powers, he can recommend himself to the favour of God, and make his heart and life what they ought to be."* You then ask, "Does this agree with the account that the scripture gives us of the helpless and miserable condition of human nature without a Saviour?" I readily reply, that it does. Moses has given us an account, taken probably from distant traditions, and indistinct hieroglyphics, of two persons, whom he calls Adam and Eve, from whom the Jewish nation, whose origin and history he undertook to write, were descended. These two persons, we are told, broke in some way or other a commandment of God; in consequence of which it was threatened they should surely die. To this obscure account given by Moses,

the

* P. 21.

the Christian writers sometimes allude, particularly Paul, who speaks of Adam as the first man who sinned, and the first man who died. But neither Paul, nor any other New Testament writer, speaks of all mankind as condemned to eternal death, on account of an apple eaten by Adam, who is said, by a dark Eastern tradition, to have been the first human being who lived in that part of the world. Nor does a single sacred writer speak of any innate depravity communicated, in some mysterious way, to the descendants of Adam, much less to all the inhabitants of this part of the world, who, there is some reason to suspect, may have had a different, though a similar origin. The rational Christian, sir, sees no reason therefore, why he is to consider man, when born into the world, as any thing more than an innocent helpless creature, whose mind gradually opens to receive impressions, and whose character corresponds to the information, the examples, and the other advantages he has enjoyed. The knowledge of God, of duty, and of the means of happiness afforded to the heathen world, was indeed defective; and even the law of Moses was *weak through the flesh*, insufficient to controul the irregular fallies of appetite. The consequence was, that "all (Jews and Gentiles) sinned" and came short of the glory of God." To remedy these evils, to furnish the minds of men with information the most important, and to quicken them to virtue
by

by incitements the most influential, were the designs of Christ's mission. And we are actually informed that *he who properly exerts his faculties and powers may recommend himself to the favour of God*, while he who remains unaffected by the Christian motives to virtue shall be an outcast from the divine friendship. "God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

You also tell us, "while the evangelical doctrine" (viz. that which represents Christ as God and man in one person) "humbles the sinner and exalts the Saviour, by the other scheme the sinner is exalted and the Saviour is abased. The Arian *degrades* Christ from his deity to a creature: the Socinian reduces him to the condition of a mere man, and makes his life a pattern of obedience only, and his death *nothing more than* an example of suffering and a confirmation of his doctrine."* How your *evangelical doctrine humbles the sinner*, it is not easy to perceive; one would imagine that the system which teaches the offender that his depravity arose from the guilt of a man who sinned some

thousands of years past, would not tend so much to abase him before his Maker, as the system which taught him that his guilt consisted in the voluntary choice he made of sin, when good and evil, blessing and cursing, were set before him. It is also difficult to see how your curious notion of "God and man in one person" *exalts the Saviour*. Upon your scheme, being *man*, he must have possessed the common powers and passions of man; and being God, he must have possessed the omnipotence, and the infinite knowledge of JEHOVAH. These human and divine properties you tell us he united *in one person*; when therefore you hear him say that he could do nothing of himself, and that he knew not the day and the hour when the last judgment would take place, you cannot entertain, nor persuade us to entertain, any very *exalted* ideas of his veracity, if actually at that very time he was conscious that Almighty power, and boundless knowledge, were exclusively his own. I would therefore beseech you, sir, to consider by whose system "the sinner is exalted, and the Saviour abased," and by whom he is *degraded*: by the rational Christian, who, after a serious examination of the sacred scriptures, cannot perceive that the Son of Mary is spoken of as equal to him who fills immensity; or by yourself, who indirectly charge the Holy Jesus with quibbling and falsehood. What you say respecting the ends which the Socinian supposes to have been

answered

answered by the life and the death of Christ, is only an additional proof that you are unacquainted with the system you oppose.

You proceed* to examine doctrines by your fourth mark, which is, that "right sentiments ascribe our restoration to the divine favour, entirely to the grace of God, to the death of Christ, and to the power of the Holy Ghost." Here you speak of the grace of God as the *moving cause*, of the obedience and death of Christ as the *meritorious cause* of our salvation; and of our sanctification as proceeding from the influences of the Holy Ghost, whose *office*, you tell us, it is, in the *æconomy of redemption*, to enlighten the understanding and to renew the soul. In an attempt to shew that your sentiments were most agreeable to the simple language of the scriptures, you should have omitted this scholastic jargon; but perhaps you thought that the best way to hide the deformity of your creed was to envelop it in the clouds of mysterious phraseology. You ask "who is there, that, in reading the writings, and hearing the discourses of" rational Christians, "finds *free grace* extolled and magnified from the consideration of the ignorance, guilt, and misery of man?" I answer, *free grace* is extolled by those writings and those discourses

* P. 23.

courses in which the salvation of sinners is ascribed solely to the mercy of God, uninfluenced by the obedience and death of Christ, as a *meritorious* or *procuring* cause. Those who maintain that the Deity pardons the penitent offender without any external inducement, are the only consistent advocates of *free grace*. To assert in one sentence that we are indebted to the *mercy* of God for our salvation, and in the next to say that this salvation is altogether *purchased* by the merits of Christ, is one of those theological solecisms, commonly called mysteries, which your system contains, and which a rational believer is unable to reconcile.

You represent the rational system as inimical to “an habitual dependance on God for his assistance.”* Now this representation of our tenets is truly unaccountable. For though we maintain, from the most conclusive evidence, that the term *Holy Spirit*, in the New Testament, means only that miraculous power vouchsafed to the early Christians; still we are well known to contend, that all the causes which exist in nature are but the varied energy of God; that by means of those circumstances in which we are placed, *God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure*, and that whatever we are, or enjoy, should be re-

N ferred

* P. 27.

ferred to him, as the *giver of every good and perfect gift*.* We are persuaded that no sentiments can tend more directly to affect the heart, and that if we lived under their influence we should habitually act *as seeing him who is invisible*.

You insinuate, sir,† that the professors of rational sentiments “enter deeply into the spirit of the world, “follow its customs, adopt its maxims, and indulge “liberally in its pleasures;”—that they have not “the “same tenderness of conscience, the same dread of “offending God, the same watchfulness against what “are called little sins, and the same uneasiness when “iniquity has been committed, with those of evangelical “sentiments.” But so far as the spirit, the customs, the maxims, and the pleasures of the world are incorrupt, in what does the evil of adopting them consist? Christianity surely was not intended to prescribe any grotesque species of attire, speech, or manners, or to deprive us of any pleasures of sense or of imagination, with which we have been furnished by the liberal Author of
our

* I would take leave to recommend to Mr. Bogue's serious perusal a sermon by Dr. Priestley on *Habitual Devotion*. He will there see that a constant respect to God is consistent with the most rational sentiments of theology.

† P. 29.

our nature. We are instructed to "use the world as
 "not abusing it;" to conform with its innocent habits
 and pleasures, while we abstain from its corruptions.
 Excuse me, sir, when I say that this charge of your's
 reminds me of a reply, which I have somewhere read,
 made by one of Charles's adherents, to an imputation
 of irreligion by one of the *evangelical* Cromwell's army.
 "Our sins," said the royalist, "are the sins of men,
 "intemperance and incontinency; but your sins are the
 "sins of devils, spiritual pride and rebellion." From
 the crime of rebellion your party, in common with the
 other modern nonconformists, are certainly exempt.
 But I would ask, sir, whether the panegyric you pro-
 nounce upon yourself and your friends, and the cen-
 sures you cast upon others, do not favour a little of
 spiritual pride? Whether they do not resemble the
 spirit and the language of the Pharisee, when he said,
 "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are?"

If it should be allowed that we are deficient in ten-
 derness of conscience, in the dread of offending God,
 in watchfulness against little sins, and in uneasiness when
 iniquity has been committed, this concession would not
 necessarily imply any reflexion upon our principles;
 since it frequently happens that the opinions of men
 are better than their conduct. An inconsistency be-
 tween the faith and the practice of the rational Chris-

tian might arise from a variety of causes.—Many who now profess the system of Unitarianism may have been educated in the bosom of some established church, or some other community of *evangelical* believers, whose tenets may have insulted the understandings of mankind: persons thus educated, when convinced of their mistake, are prone to exchange their superstition for scepticism, and their enthusiasm for irreligion.—Many persons, also, by a conviction of the falsehood of some principal article in their creed, may be induced to doubt with respect to the whole system of their faith, with every part of which the rejected article had been associated. Hence, however regular and fervent their piety may have been upon their former opinions, the confusion of their minds may suspend for a while the exercise of their devotion. The agitations produced by the revolution of their principles, especially in some persons, may have been lasting as well as violent; the mental tumult, however, at length subsides, and they gradually acquire the habit of acting with peculiar facility from their newly acquired sentiments.—It deserves farther to be remembered, that the attention of many, when seeking satisfaction upon doctrines which reason seemed to recommend, and prejudice to oppose, has been employed rather about the *credenda* than the *agenda* of religion, about what is to be believed, than what is to be practised: but the habit of attending to religion

religion merely as a subject of controversy has too frequently an unfavourable effect upon devotion and virtue.—Let it also be considered, that perhaps the first to discover and renounce prevailing errors, will be those persons who are the least attached to any particular set of religious principles; while men of distinguished piety will continue long before they relinquish those doctrines upon which they have erected the whole fabric of their devotion.*—Thus it appears that the justice of your charges might be allowed against the professors of rational Christianity in the recent state of its revival, without acknowledging the justice of any reflexion upon the system itself. But, sir, notwithstanding the influence of the causes I have enumerated, the issue of an impartial comparison of our moral and religious characters with those of your evangelical brethren, would not be greatly to our disadvantage. An extensive and intimate acquaintance with both parties probably might qualify me to decide upon this subject; but I forbear to make declarations tending rather to irritate than to convince. Your errors and our's are seen and recorded by knowledge which cannot err; and the respective value of our characters will be determined by a

N 3

tribunal,

* See an excellent discourse by the Rev. Thomas Belsham, "on the importance of truth, and the duty of making an open profession of it." P. 32.

tribunal, where prejudice and party spirit shall not influence the decision. It is your duty, sir, and mine, to recommend, by our instructions and behaviour, the practice of virtue within the sphere of our influence, rather than to set an example to the weak and illiterate of calumniating their fellow Christians. Let neither of us be found beating our master's servants when he comes.

You say,* "without fear of contradiction, that "evangelical Christians discover exactly the same positions with the saints in holy writ, at the approach "of death;" and you insinuate that "the same lively "hope and joy are not as frequently displayed by those "who deny the divinity and atonement of Christ." This difference between us and the early Christians you attribute to our denial of the divinity and the atonement of Christ, and also to our expectation of "a "state of insensibility between death and the resurrection." But you have not pointed out the tendency of a belief in the divinity and atonement of Christ to produce this hope and joy; nor have you attempted to shew, from the language used by early Christians in the prospect of death, that they derived their consolation from these doctrines. You are peculiarly unfortunate,

sir,

* P. 31.

fir, in referring to our expectation of an intermediate state of insensibility as a great cause of our supposed dissimilarity to the primitive believers; since the very passages you have quoted from them are destitute of all evidence that they hoped immediately after death to enter upon a new mode of conscious existence, and even give very convincing proofs that future happiness was not expected by them to commence till that day, when the Man whom GOD had appointed should return to raise the dead and to judge the world. In proof of the joy they experienced, you adduce the satisfactory language of Paul to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against *that day*;"* and his beautiful exclamation, "O death, where

* 2 Tim. i. 12. By *that day* the Apostle evidently meant the day of general resurrection; as we learn from Chap. iv. 8, of this epistle. His uniform language on this subject is agreeable to that to the Colossians chap. iii. 4. "When Christ who is our life shall appear, *then* shall ye also appear with him in glory."—The expectation of a state of conscious existence between death and the resurrection is not only unscriptural; it is also unphilosophical, pernicious, and uncomfortable—*unphilosophical*, since, all mental actions being performed through the medium of corporeal organs, there can be no evidence that the mind possesses a power to act or even to exist separately from the body—*pernicious*, since, by representing

“where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
 “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through
 “our Lord Jesus Christ!”* In the *former* of these
 passages the Apostle expressly refers to the day of
 Christ’s second coming; in the *latter* he intimates that
 all his expectations arose from that general resurrection,
 which the resurrection of Christ had taught him to ex-
 pect. Nay, he declares in this very connection, “if
 “Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and
 “your faith also vain.” Hence, sir, a presumption is
 derived, even from your own citations, that rational
 Christians, at the approach of death, would be likely to
 “discover

representing departed friends as already entered upon the
 eternal abodes of blessedness, and teaching us that our con-
 tinuance here only delays the commencement of that joy, to
 which at death we shall be immediately introduced, it tends to
 generate in the mind a dissatisfaction with the present state of
 trouble and temptation, and an impatience to join those who
 have preceded us—*uncomfortable*, since, after our souls have
 been released from their material prisons, and habituated to
 feel the unrestrained delights of a disembodied state, it must
 be a mortifying thought that they shall again, after the resur-
 rection, be clogged with those bodies which often on earth had
 interrupted their enjoyment, and which, however much refined
 and improved, yet being still inactive senseless matter, must
 prove through eternity an incumbrance to them in their
 heavenly employments.

* 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

“discover the same dispositions with the saints in holy writ,” their expectations with respect to futurity appearing to be exactly similar. This presumption is abundantly confirmed by fact. Had you been acquainted sufficiently with the persons whose principles and characters you have piously attempted to injure, you might have known many a rational Christian who, on the bed of sickness and death, could exclaim with Paul, “My rejoicing is this, the testimony of my conscience;” who felt the conviction that he had “fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith;” who viewed his approaching dissolution with resignation to the divine will, and with confidence in the divine promises; and who has quitted this state of trial with the humble joy inspired by reflexion and anticipation; “with decent triumph, and a look serene.”

There is, fir, in the prospect of death a *rational*, and there is an *enthusiastic* joy. The *former* includes the satisfaction derived from the review of a life well spent, and the delight arising from the expectation of that rest which remains for the virtuous; but being attended with the recollection of many failings, and a sense of the awfulness of death, it seldom discovers any tumultuous transports. To an emotion thus modest, and suitable to the imperfection of our species, I trust we are not strangers. Few instances of the *latter*, it is granted,

granted, can be found among us; but we have witnessed it frequently with uneasiness, and sometimes with horror, among your evangelical Christians. The man, whose rugged temper and unchristianized heart had rendered him here an unfit associate for the virtuous and amiable of mankind, we have seen triumphing in the prospect of an immediate admission after death into the society of the most pure and lovely beings. The giddy trifler, who had spent his life in the neglect of every thing excellent, and the habitual offender, whose conduct gave daily specimens of his love to vice, we have beholden exulting in "the hope of a speedy entrance into the joy of their Lord." We have heard even the obdurate felon at the place of execution shouting his presumptuous Hallelujahs, in concert with some evangelical divine, and thus weakening the sanctions of laws divine and human.

If this, sir, be the kind of joy of which you boast, we envy you not the possession of it; since we apprehend that a state of mind more calm and humble is better suited to such beings as we are, in the immediate prospect of dissolution.

You say, sir, we are not equally "zealous for converting souls to Christ." Do you not know that we esteem what you call *conversion*, a dangerous delusion of the

the imagination, tending rather to swell the heart with spiritual pride and presumption, than to produce that humble and rational piety, that disinterested and diffusive benevolence, that pure and amiable temper, in which we apprehend true religion to consist? Are you also so unacquainted with us, as not to know, that we consider the best method of interesting the affections, to be, by endeavouring to convince the judgment; and that we view your "lively animated preaching," as calculated rather to disturb the understanding, than to produce effects permanently good? Had you been possessed with a sufficient knowledge of us, you would have seen that our inferiority to you and your evangelical brethren, with respect to what you term *servent zeal*, implied no imputation on our characters and principles. Our zeal, however, for the moral and intellectual improvement of mankind, though not flaming, I trust, is rationally warm; and our exertions in the cause of true religion, though not quixotic, I hope, are active and persevering. But I forbear, checked by the advice of Solomon, "*Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.*"

I will take the liberty to remark upon one farther quotation before I conclude. You inform us that the societies of rational Christians, "though under the
"ministry of men of talents and learning, are gradually
"dwindling

“dwindling away.” Thus, sir, it appears that you would prove the truth of a doctrine from the number of its professors. This mode of reasoning would have proved to Elijah, that Baal was to be worshipped rather than the God of Israel; that the reformation from popery was an unnecessary innovation; and that Christianity itself was a dream. If numbers be the established test of truth, every improvement in natural, in political, in moral, and in philosophical science, being necessarily at first in the hands of a very small minority, should be smothered at its birth; and the respective claims to attention of the contending opinions, by which the world is divided, should be determined by enumerating their several professors. If, sir, larger numbers attend the religious services of your evangelical divines, than unite in the worship of rational Christians, this may be imputed, in a great degree, to the love of mystery which prevails among the common people, and to the much larger share of what may be termed *stage-effect* in the doctrines of Calvin, and in the manner employed to set them off, than is consistent with the plain tenets of Unitarianism. The fact, however, is notoriously different from your representation. The societies of rational Christians are not dwindling away. Within these twenty years, the progress of the belief in this primitive creed, “that there is one God, and
 “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ
 “Jesus,”

“Jefus,”* has increafed with a velocity constantly accelerated. The predicted fall to the pride of Arianifm has actually taken place; and the Athanafian doctrine, with every fpecies of Trinitarian idolatry, notwithstanding the fupport it receives from the civil eftablifhments of religion, and the hold it has taken on the vulgar mind, is gradually decaying. And it requires not the aid of a prophetic fpirit to foretell the fpeedy downfall of the whole Calviniftic fystem. The rotten, tottering, monftrous ftructure muft experience the fate of all other human productions; while that fimple edifice of primitive Chriftianity, whole builder and maker is God, fhall ever remain firm, fair, and beautiful, proof againft the attacks of men, and againft the gates of hell. Human ignorance, intereft, and paffion, like the eruptions of a volcano, have overwhelmed for ages the celeftial building; but the advocates of truth are bufily employed by Providence in removing the rubbifh, and in exhibiting to the world this effect of divine fkill in its original beauty and excellence.

With fome faint hopes that thefe remarks may be the means of giving you better information concerning the principles and characters of a numerous and increafing

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

creasing class of Christians, and consequently induce
you to think and speak of them in a more charitable
manner,

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your very humble servant,

D. B. JARDINE.

Bath, July 14th, 1792.



5 JY61

Lately published, price 1s. 6d.

T H E
CAUSES OF THE INEFFICACY OF PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION
CONSIDERED, IN A
S E R M O N

Preached at the Ordination of

Rev. D. B. J A R D I N E,

At the UNITARIAN CHAPEL, BATH, February 25, 1790.

By the Rev. JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN;

With an Address on the Design of Ordination,

By the Rev. THOMAS WRIGHT;

Mr. JARDINE's REPLIES to the Questions proposed to him;

A N D

A CHARGE by the Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM.

Bath, printed by R. Cruttwell; and sold by J. Johnson, St. Paul's
Church-yard, London; Bull and Hensley, Bath; and J. Lloyd, Bristol.

